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THE HEAVENLY WORLD.

THE HEAVENLY WORLD

VIEWS OF THE FUTURE LIFE

BY
EMINENT WRITERS.

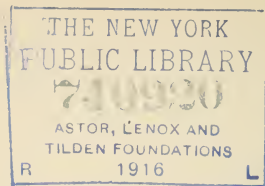
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THE GLORIOUS INHERITANCE.

C. H. SPURGEON.



I.

O BLESSED place, where we shall not need to enter into our closet to worship our Father who is in heaven, but shall in the open street behold the unveiled vision of God. O blessed time, when there shall be no Sabbaths, but one endless Sabbath! O joy of joys, when there shall be no breaking up of happy congregations, but where the general assembly and Church of the first-born shall be met for an everlasting *sederunt*, and spend it all in glorifying God.

. . . There every inhabitant is without fault before the throne of God, having neither spot nor wrinkle. There everything healthy, everything holy, and the thrice Holy One Himself is there in their midst. As for the necessities under which glorified beings may be placed, we know but very little about them, but certainly if they need to drink there is the

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river of the water of life, clear as crystal, and if they require to eat there are abundant fruits ripening each month upon that wondrous tree. All that saints can possibly need or desire will be abundantly supplied. No pining want or grim anxiety shall tempt them to ask the question, 'What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed?' 'They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters.'

Nor is there merely provision made for bare necessities, their love of beauty is considered. The city itself shines 'like a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;' and her glorious foundations are garnished with all manner of precious stones, insomuch that her light, as seen afar by the nations, gladdens them and attracts them to her. A city whose streets are lined with trees laden with luscious fruits must be lovely beyond all expression. They said of the earthly Jerusalem, 'Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion;' but what shall we say of thee, O Jerusalem above? Ziona! Ziona! Our happy home where our Father dwells, where Jesus manifests His love, whither so many of our brethren have wended their happy way, to which our steps are evermore directed; blessed are the men that stand in thy streets and worship within

thy gates! When shall we also behold thy brightness and drink of the river of thy pleasures? Thus in all respects the new Jerusalem is furnished, even with medicine it is supplied, and though we might suppose it to be no more needed, yet it is a joy to perceive that it is there to prevent all maladies in those whom aforetime it has healed. Leaves for health are plentiful above, and hence the inhabitant shall no more say, 'I am sick.'—*Healing Leaves*, No. 1,233.

II.

OUR curiosity inquires into the condition of those who have newly entered heaven. Like fresh stars they have lit up the celestial firmament with an added splendour. New voices are heard in the orchestra of the redeemed. In what condition are they at the moment of their admission to the heavenly seats? Their bodies are left behind, we know, to moulder back to mother earth, but how fare their unclothed immortal spirits? What now occupies those pure and perfect minds? We are not left in the dark upon this matter: our Lord Jesus Christ has brought immortality and life to light, and in the words of our text and the preceding and following verses we are informed as to these new comers, these recruits for the Church triumphant. Were our text properly translated it would run thus: 'these are they that

come out of great tribulation,' or who 'are coming,'—in the present tense. If the word does not distinctly refer to those who have 'just come,' it certainly includes such. Those who 'come' are those who have come, and those who shall come, but it must include those who are at this moment arriving, those whom I venture to call heaven's new-born princes, her fresh blooming flowers whose beauty for the first time is seen in Paradise. Lo, I see the newly departed passing through the river of death, ascending the other shore, and entering in through the gates into the city. What are these new comers doing? We find that they are not kept waiting outside, nor put through a quarantine, nor cast into purgatorial fires, but as they arrive from the great tribulation they are at once *admitted to holy fellowship*—'therefore are they before the throne of God : ' dwelling in the courts of the Great King, to go no more out for ever. Earthly courtiers only stand at times in their monarch's presence, but these abide for evermore before the throne of God and of the Lamb, favoured to behold the face of God without a veil between, and to see the King in His beauty in the land that is very far off. How quickly has earth faded from their minds, and heaven's glory flashed upon them ! The sick bed and the weeping friends are gone, and the throne of their God and Saviour fills the whole field of their delighted vision.

They are *arrayed for holy service*, and arrayed at once, for they wear white robes fitted for their priestly service. It is true they have no material bodies, but in some mystic sense which is applicable to the spirit world these holy men wear a vesture which qualifies them for celestial worship and all the holy service of the heavenly state. . . .

By 'white robes' we also understand *the fitness of their souls for the service to which they are appointed*; they were chosen before all worlds to be kings and priests unto God: but a priest might not stand before the Lord to minister until he had put on his appointed linen garments; and therefore the souls which have been taken up to heaven are represented in white robes to show that they are completely fitted for that Divine service to which they were ordained of old, to which the Spirit of God called them while they were here, and in which Jesus Christ leads the way, being a priest for ever at their head. They are able to offer the incense of praise acceptably, for they are girded with the garments of their office. We know not all the occupations of the blessed, but we know that they are all such as can be performed by a royal priesthood; and hence the priestly garb betokens that they are ready to do the will of God in all things, and to offer perpetually the sacrifice of praise unto the Lord. . . . They wear the victor garb, and bear the palm which is the victor symbol.

White is also the colour of *rest*. If a man desired

to do a day's work in this poor grimy world, a snow-white garment would hardly suit him, for it would soon be stained and soiled. Hence the garments of toil are generally of another colour, more fitted for a dusty world. The day of rest, the day of sabbatic joy and pleasure, is fittingly denoted by white garments. Well may the redeemed be thus arrayed, for they have finally put off the garments of toil and the armour of battle, and they rest from their labours in the rest of God.

Chiefly, white is the colour of *joy*. Almost all nations have adopted it as most suitable for bridal array, and so therefore these happy spirits have put on their bridal robes, and are ready for the marriage supper of the Lamb. Though they are waiting for the resurrection, yet are they waiting with their bridal garments on, waiting and rejoicing, waiting and chanting their Redeemer's praises, for they feast with Him till He shall descend to consummate their bliss by bringing their bodies from the grave to share with them in the eternal joy.--*Why the Heavenly Robes are White*, No. 1,316.

III.

BY night we have turned our eye up to the blue azure, and we have seen the stars—those golden-

fleeced sheep of God, feeding on the blue meadow of the sky, and we have said, 'See! those are the nails in the floor of heaven up yonder;' and if this earth has such a glorious covering, what must that of the kingdom of heaven be? And when our eye has wandered from star to star, we have thought, 'Now I can tell what heaven is by the beauty of its floor.' But it is all a mistake. All that we can see can never help us to understand heaven. At another time we have seen some glorious landscape; we have seen the white river winding among the verdant fields like a stream of silver, covered on either side with emerald; we have seen the mountain towering to the sky, the mist rising on it, or the golden sunrise covering all the east with glory; or we have seen the west, again, reddened with the light of the sun as it departed; and we have said, 'Surely, these grandeurs must be something like heaven;' we have clapped our hands, and exclaimed—

'Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood,
Stand dressed in living green.'

We have imagined that there really were fields in heaven, and that things of earth were patterns of things in heaven. It was all a mistake:—'Eye hath not seen it'.

. . . There are precious moments when the angel of contemplation gives us a vision. He comes and puts his finger on the lip of the noisy world; he bids the

wheels that are continually rattling in our ears be still ; and we sit down, and there is a solemn silence of the mind. We find our heaven and our God ; we engage ourselves in contemplating the glories of Jesus, or mounting upwards towards the bliss of heaven—in going backward to the great secrets of electing love, in considering the immutability of the blessed covenant, in thinking of that wind which ‘bloweth where it listeth,’ in remembering our own participation of that life which cometh from God, in thinking of our blood-bought union with the Lamb, of the consummation of our marriage with Him in realms of light and bliss, or any such kindred topics. Then it is that we know a little about heaven. Have ye never found, O ye sons and daughters of gaiety, a holy calm come over you at times, in reading the thoughts of your fellow-men ? But oh ! how blessed to come and read the thoughts of God, and work, and weave them out in contemplation. Then we have a web of contemplation that we wrap around us like an enchanted garment, and we open our eyes and see heaven. Christian ! when you are enabled by the Spirit to hold a season of sweet contemplation, then you can say—‘ But He hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit ;’ for the joys of heaven are akin to the joys of contemplation, and the joys of a holy calm in God. But there are times with me—I dare say there may be with some of you—when we do something more than contemplate—when we arise by

meditation above thought itself, and when our soul, after having touched the Pisgah of contemplation by the way, flies positively into the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. There are seasons when the spirit not only stands and flaps his wings o'er the gulf, but positively crosses the Jordan and dwells with Christ, holds fellowship with angels, and talks with spirits—gets up there with Jesus, clasps Him in his arms, and cries, 'My beloved is mine, and I am His; I will hold Him, and will not let Him go.' I know what it is at times to lay my beating head on the bosom of Christ with something more than faith—actually and positively to get hold of Him; not only to take Him by faith, but actually and positively to feed on Him; to feel a vital union with Him, to grasp His arm, and feel His very pulse beating. You say, 'Tell it not to unbelievers; they will laugh!' Laugh ye may; but when we are there we care not for your laughter, if ye should laugh as loud as devils: for one moment's fellowship with Jesus would recompense us for it all. Picture not fairy lands; this is heaven, this is bliss. 'He hath revealed it unto us by His Spirit.' . . . If you want to know much of heaven, spend some extra time in prayer; for God then reveals it to us by His Spirit.—*Heaven, No. 56.*

IV.

READY-TO-HALT, when he dies, will bury his crutches, and Feeble-mind will leave his feebleness behind him ; Fearing will never fear again ; poor Doubting-heart will learn confidently to believe. Oh, joy above all joys ! The day is coming when I shall 'know as I am known,' when I shall not want to ask whether I am His or not, for in His arms encircled, there shall be no room for doubt. O Christian, you think there are slips between your lips and that cup of joy ; but when you grasp the handle of that cup with your hand, and are drinking draughts of ineffable delight, then you will have no doubt or fear.

. . . There never once shall be heard the toll of the funeral bell ; no hearse with plumes has ever darkened the streets of gold ; no emblems of sorrow have ever intruded into the homes of the immortal ; they are strangers to the meaning of death ; they cannot die—they live for ever ; having no power to decay, and no possibility of corruption. O ! rest of the righteous, how blest art thou, where families shall again be bound up in one bundle, where parted friends shall again meet to part no more, and where the whole Church of Christ, united in one mighty circle, shall together praise God and the Lamb throughout eternal ages. . . . The Church member at the Lord's table has a sweet enjoyment of rest in fellowship with the saints ; but, ah ! up

there the rest of Church fellowship far surpasses anything that is known here ; for there are no divisions there, no angry words at the Church meetings, no harsh thoughts of one another, no bickerings about doctrine, no fightings about practice. There, Baptist, and Presbyterian, and Independent, and Wesleyan, and Episcopalian, serving the same Lord, and having been washed in the same blood, sing the same song, and are all joined in one. There, pastors and deacons never look coolly on each other ; no haughty prelates there, no lofty-minded ministers there, but all meek and lowly, all knit together in brotherhood ; they have a rest which surpasseth all the rest of the Church on earth. . . . When we shall have plunged into a very bath of joy, we shall have found the delights even of communion on earth to have been but the dipping of the finger in the cup, but the dipping of the bread in the dish, whereas heaven itself shall be the participation of the whole of the joy, and not the mere antepast of it. Here we sometimes enter into the portico of happiness, there we shall go into the presence-chamber of the King : here we look over the hedge and see the flowers in heaven's garden, there we shall walk between the beds of bliss, and pluck fresh flowers at each step : here we just look and see the sunlight of heaven in the distance, like the lamps of the thousand-gated cities shining afar off ; but there we shall see them in all their blaze of splendour : here we listen to the whisperings of

heaven's melody, borne by winds from afar ; but there, entranced, amidst the grand oratorio of the blessed, we shall join in the everlasting hallelujah to the great Messiah, the God, the I AM. Oh ! again I say, do we not wish to mount aloft, and fly away, to enter into the rest which remaineth to the people of God ? . . . There, my friends, the rest is perfect ; the body there rests perpetually, the mind too always rests ; though the inhabitants are always busy, always serving God, yet they are never weary, never toil-torn, never fagged ; they never fling themselves upon their couches at the end of the day, and cry, ' Oh ! when shall I be away from this land of toil ? ' They never stand up in the burning sunlight, and wipe the hot sweat from their brow ; they never rise from their bed in the morning, half refreshed, to go to laborious study. No, they are perfectly at rest, stretched on the couch of eternal joy. They know not the semblance of a tear ; they have done with sin, and care, and woe, and with their Saviour rest.—*Heavenly Rest*, No. 133.

V.

HERE my best joys bear ' mortal ' on their brow ; here my fair flowers fade ; here my sweet cups have dregs and are soon empty ; here my sweetest birds must die, and their melody must soon be hushed ; here my most pleasant days must have their nights ;

here the flowings of my bliss must have their ebbs, everything doth pass away : but there everything shall be immortal ; the harp shall be unruined, the crown unwithered, the eye undimmed, the voice unfaltering, the heart unwavering, and the being wholly consolidated unto eternity. Happy day, happy day, when mortality shall be swallowed up of life, and the mortal shall have put on immortality ! . . .

Seest thou that little river of death, glistening in the sunlight, and across it dost thou see the pinnacles of the eternal city ? Dost thou mark the pleasant suburbs and all the joyous inhabitants ? Turn thine eye to that spot. Dost thou see where that ray of light is glancing now ? There is a little spot there ; dost thou see it ? That is thy patrimony ; that is thine. Oh, if thou couldst fly across thou wouldst see written upon it, ' This remaineth for such an one ; preserved for him only. He shall be caught up and dwell for ever with God.' Poor doubting one ; see thine inheritance ; it is thine. If thou believest in the Lord Jesus, thou art one of the Lord's people ; if thou hast repented of sin, thou art one of the Lord's people ; if thou hast been renewed in heart, thou art one of the Lord's people, and there is a place for thee, a crown for thee, a harp for thee. No one else shall have it but thyself ; and thou shalt have it ere long. Just pardon me one moment if I beg of you to conceive of yourselves as being in heaven. Is it not a strange thing to think of—a poor clown in heaven ? Think, how

will you feel with your crown on your head? Weary matron, many years have rolled over you. How changed will be the scene when you are young again. Ah, toil-worn labourer, only think when thou shalt rest for aye. Canst thou conceive it? Couldst thou but think for a moment of thyself as being in heaven now, what a strange surprise would seize thee. Thou wouldst not so much as say, 'What! are these streets of gold? What! are these walls of jasper? What! am I here? in white? Am I here with a crown on my brow? Am I here singing, that was always groaning? What! I praise God that once cursed Him? What! I lifting up my voice in His honour? Oh, precious blood that washed me clean! Oh, precious faith that set me free! Oh, precious Spirit that made me repent, else I had been cast away and been in hell! But oh! what wonders! Angels! I am surprised; I am enraptured! Wonder of wonders! Oh, gates of pearls, I long since heard of you! Oh, joys that never fade, I long since heard tell of you! But I am like the Queen of Sheba; the half has not yet been told me. Profusion, oh profusion of bliss!—wonder of wonders!—miracle of miracles! What a world I am in! And oh! that I am here, this is the topmost miracle of all!' And yet 'tis true, 'tis true; and that is the glory of it. It is true. Come, worm, and prove it; come pall; come shroud; come, and prove it. Then come wings of faith, come, leap like a seraph; come, eternal ages, come, and ye shall prove

that there are joys that the eye hath not seen, which the ear hath not heard, and which only God can reveal to us by His Spirit.—*Ibid.*

VI.

IT may be because I am constitutionally idle, that I look upon heaven in the aspect of rest with greater delight than under any other view of it, with but one exception. To let the head which is so continually exercised, for once lie still—to have no care, no trouble, no need to labour, to strain the intellect, or vex the limbs! I know that many of you, the sons of poverty and of toil, look forward to the Sabbath-day, because of the enjoyments of the sanctuary, and because of the rest which it affords you. You look for heaven as Watts did in his song.

‘There shall I bathe my weary soul
In seas of heavenly rest,
And not a wave of trouble roll
Across my peaceful breast.’

‘There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.’ ’Tis not a rest of sleep, but yet a rest as perfect as though they slept; it is a rest which puts from them all carking care, all harrowing remorse, all thoughts of to-morrow, all straining after something which they have not as yet. They are runners no more—they have reached the goal; they are warriors no more—they have achieved the victory; they are

labourers no more—they have reaped the harvest. ‘They rest, saith the Spirit; they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.’ . . .

There is a passage in the book of Revelation, which may sometimes puzzle the uninstructed reader, where it is said concerning the angels, that ‘they rest not day and night;’ and as we are to be as the angels of God, it must undoubtedly be true in heaven, that, in a certain sense, they rest not day nor night. They always rest, so far as ease and freedom from care is concerned; they never rest, in the sense of indolence or inactivity. In heaven, spirits are always on the wing; their lips are always singing the eternal *hallelujahs* unto the great *Jehovah* that sitteth upon the throne; their fingers are never divorced from the strings of their golden harps; their feet never cease to run in obedience to the eternal will; they rest, but they rest on the wing; as the poet pictured the angel as he flew,—not needing to move his wings, but resting, and yet darting swiftly through the ether, as though he were a flash shot from the eye of God. So shall it be with the people of God eternally; ever singing, never hoarse with music; ever serving, never wearied with their service. ‘They rest not day and night.’ . . .

Heaven is a place of *communion* with all the people of God. I am sure that in heaven they know each other. I could not perhaps just now prove it in so many words, but I feel that a heaven of people who

did not know each other, and had no fellowship, could not be heaven; because God has so constituted the human heart that it loves society, and especially the renewed heart is so made that it cannot help communing with all the people of God. . . .

We shall talk of our trials on the way thither—talk most of all of Him who by His faithful love and His potent arm has brought us safely through. We shall not sing solos, but in chorus shall we praise our King. We shall not look upon our fellows there like the man in the iron mask, whose name and character we do not know; for there we shall know even as we are known. You shall talk with the prophets; you shall have conversation with the martyrs; you shall sit again at the feet of the great reformers and all your brethren in faith who have fallen before you, or who have rather entered into rest before; and these shall be your companions on the other side the grave. How sweet must that be! How blessed—that holy converse, that happy union, that general assembly and Church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven! —*The Earnest of Heaven*, No. 358.

VII.

PART of the bliss of heaven will consist in *joy over sinners saved*. The angels look down from the battlements of the city which hath foundations and when they see prodigals return they sing.

Jesus calleth together His friends and His neighbours, and He saith unto them, 'Rejoice with Me, for I have found the sheep which was lost.' The angels begin the theme ; the sacred fire runs through the host, and all the saints above take up the strain. Hark, how they sing before the throne, for it has just been whispered there of some Saul, 'Behold, he prayeth !' Hark how their songs get a new inspiration—how their eternal Sabbath seems to be sabbatised afresh, and 'the rest' becomes more joyous far, while they sing of new-born sons added to the family, and new names written in the register of the Church below ! Part of the joy of heaven, and no mean part of it, will be to watch the fight on earth, to see the Conqueror as He marches on, and to behold the trophies of His grace, and the spoils which His hands shall win. . . . There thy golden joys are but as stones, and thy most precious jewels are as common as the pebbles of the brook. *Now* thou drinkest drops, and they are so sweet, that thy palate doth not soon forget them ; but there thou shalt put thy lips to the cup, and drink, but never drain it dry ; there thou shalt sit at the well-head, and drink as much as thou canst draw, and draw as much as thou canst desire. Now thou seest the glimmerings of heaven as a star twinkling from leagues of distance ; follow that glimmering, and thou shalt see heaven no more as a star, but as the sun which shineth in its strength. . . .

There are moments with the believer, when, whether

in the body or out of the body, he cannot tell—God knoweth—but this he knows, that Christ's left hand is under his head, and His right hand doth embrace him. Christ hath shown to him His hands and His side. He could say with Thomas, 'My Lord and my God ;' but he could not say much more. 'The world recedes ; it disappears.' The things of time are covered with a pall of darkness ; Christ only stands out before the believer's view. I have known that some believers, when they have been in this state, could say with the spouse, 'Stay me with apples, comfort me with flagons, for I am sick of love.' Their love of Christ, and Christ's love to them, had overcome them. Their soul was something in the state of John, whom we described last Lord's-day morning : 'When I saw *Him*, I fell at His feet as dead.' A sacred faintness overcomes my soul ; I die—I die to prove the fulness of redeeming love, the love of Christ to me. Oh, these seasons ! Talk ye not of feasts, ye sons of mirth ; tell us not of music, ye who delight in melodious sound ; tell us not of wealth, and rank, and honour, and the joys of victory. One hour with Christ is worth an eternity of all earth's joys. May I but see *Him*, may I but see *His* face, but behold *His* beauties—come winds, blow ye away all earthly joys I have—this joy shall well content my soul. Let the hot sun of tribulation dry up all the water-brooks ; but this fresh spring shall fill my cup full to the brim—yea, it

shall make a river of delight, wherein my soul shall bathe. To be with Christ on earth is the best, the surest, the most ecstatic foretaste and earnest of the joys of heaven. Forget not this, Christian ! If thou hast ever known Christ, heaven is thine ; and when thou hast enjoyed Christ, thou hast learned a little of what the bliss of futurity shall be.—*Ibid.*

VIII.

THE elders in the Church are those who by reason of years have had their senses exercised ; they are not the saplings of the forest, but the well-rooted trees ; they are not the blades of corn up-springing, but the full corn in the ear awaiting the reaper's sickle. Such are the saints before the throne. They have made wondrous strides in knowledge ; they understand now the heights and depths, the lengths and breadths of the love of Christ, which still surpasses even *their* knowledge. The meanest, if there be such differences, the meanest of the glorified understands more of the things of God than the greatest divine on earth. The rending of the veil of death is the removal of much of our ignorance. It may be that the saints in heaven progress in knowledge—that is possible, but it is certain that at the time of their departure they made a wondrous spring ; they are babes no longer ; they are children and infant beginners no more ; God teacheth them in one five

minutes, by a sight of the face of Jesus, more than they could have learned in threescore years and ten while present in the body and absent from the Lord. Their heresies are all cleared away with their sins; their mistakes are all removed; the same hand which wipes away all tears from their eyes, wipes away all motes from their eyes too. Then they become sound in doctrine, skilful in teaching; they become masters in Israel by the sudden infusion of the wisdom of God by the Holy Ghost. They are 'elders' before the throne. They are not unripe corn gathered green and damp, but they are all fully ripe, and they come to the garner as shocks of corn come in their season. . . .

You will notice that these elders are said to be *around the throne*. We suppose, as near as we can catch the thought of John, sitting in a semi-circle, as the Jewish Sanhedrim did, around the Prince of Israel. It is a somewhat singular thing that in the passage in Canticles, where Solomon sings of the king sitting at his table, the Hebrew has it 'a round table.' From this, some expositors, I think without straining the text, have said, 'There is an equality among the saints.' In heaven they are not some sitting at the head, and some sitting lower down, but there is an equality in the position and condition of glorified spirits. Certainly that idea is conveyed by the position of the four-and-twenty elders. We do not find one of them nearer than the

other, but they all sat round about the throne. We believe, then, that the condition of glorified spirits in heaven is that of nearness to Christ, clear vision of His glory, constant access to His court, and familiar fellowship with His person. Nor do we think that there is any difference before the throne between one saint and another. We believe that all the people of God, apostles, martyrs, ministers, or private and obscure Christians, shall all have the same place *near the throne*, where they shall for ever gaze upon their exalted Lord, and for ever be satisfied in His love. There shall not be some at a distance, far away in the remote streets of the celestial city, and others in the broad thoroughfares; there shall not be some near the centre, and others far away on the verge of the wide circumference; but they shall all be near to Christ, all ravished with His love, all eating and drinking at the same table with Him, as equally His favourites and His friends. . . .

These saints not only offered praise, but *prayer*. This was the meaning of the bowls, which are so foolishly translated vials. A vial is precisely the opposite of the vessel that was intended; the vial is long and narrow, whereas, this is broad and shallow. A bowl is meant, full of incense, covered over with a lid, and perforated with holes, through which the smoke of the incense rises. This does not mean that the four-and-twenty elders offer the prayers of the saints below, but their own prayers. Some have thought,

Is there any prayer in heaven? Certainly, there is room for prayer in heaven. If you want proof, we have it in the chapter which follows the one out of which we have been reading this morning—the ninth verse of the sixth chapter,—‘I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held; and they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?’ There is prayer.

. . . Bending from their shining thrones, being dead they yet speak; and they say to us thus: . . . Brethren, *follow on*. Be not dismayed. We fought the same battles that you fight, and passed through the like tribulations; yet we have not perished, but enjoy the eternal reward. Press on; heaven awaits you; vacant thrones are here for you—crowns which no other heads can wear—harps that no other hands must play. Follow courageously, faithfully, trusting in Him who hath begun the good work in you, and who will carry it on.

Hear them, again, as they say, Mark the footsteps that we trod; for only in one way can you reach our rest. We have washed our robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. They say to all the world, If ye would be clean, wash there too. None but Jesus can save your souls. Trust in Him; repose in His atonement; confide in His finished

work ; flee to his sacrificial blood. You shall be saved by faith in Him, even as we have been.

“I asked them whence their victory came ; they with united breath
Ascribed their conquest to the Lamb, their triumph to His death.”

The Elders Before the Throne, No. 441.

IX.

THERE is general mourning wherever the good man was known ; but mark ye, it is only in the dark that this sorrow reigns. Up there in the light, what are they doing ? That spirit as it left the body found not itself alone. Angels had come to meet it. Angelic spirits clasped the disembodied spirit in their arms, and bore it upward beyond the stars—beyond where the angel in the sun keeps his everlasting watch—beyond, beyond this lower sky immeasurable leagues. Lo ! the pearly gates appear, and the azure light of the city of bejewelled walls ! The spirit asketh, ‘Is yonder city the fair Jerusalem where they need no candle, neither light of the sun ?’ He shall see for himself ere long, for they are nearing the Holy City, and it is time for the cherub-bearers to begin their choral. The music breaks from the lips of those that convey the saint to heaven—‘Lift up your heads, O ye gates, and be ye lifted up ye everlasting doors, that the blood-bought of the King of

glory may come in !' The gates of pearl give way, the joyous crowds of heaven welcome their brother to the seats of immortality. But what next, I cannot tell. In vain the fancy strives to paint it. Jesus is there, and the spirit is in His arms.

* * * * *

I could lose myself while talking upon this subject, for my heart is all on fire. I wander, but I cannot help it ; my heart is far away upon the hills with my Beloved Lord. What will the bliss of glory be ? A surprise, I think, even to those who shall obtain it. We shall scarcely know ourselves when we get to heaven, we shall be so surprised at the difference. That poor man yonder is to be robed in all the splendours of a king. Come with me, and see those bright ones ; that son of toil, who rests for ever ; that child of sin, washed by Jesus, and now a companion of the God of heaven, and I the chief of sinners singing out His praise ; Saul of Tarsus, hymning the music of Calvary ; the penitent thief, with his deep bass note, exalting dying love ; and Magdalen, mounting to the alto notes, for there must be some voices even in heaven which must sing alone and mount to higher notes where the rest of us cannot reach—the whole together singing, 'Unto Him that loved us, and hath washed us from our sins in His blood, unto Him be glory for ever and ever.' Oh that we were there ! Oh that we were there ! But we must patiently wait

the Master's will. It shall not be long ere He shall say, 'Come up hither.'—*The Voice from Heaven*, No. 488.

X.

*escape from
misery.* THERE are many reasons why glorified spirits cannot weep. These are well known to you, but let us just hint at them. *All outward causes of grief are gone.* They will never hear the toll of the knell in heaven. The mattock and the shroud are unknown things there. The horrid thought of death never flits across an immortal spirit. They are never parted; the great meeting has taken place to part no more. Up yonder they have no losses and crosses in business. 'They serve God day and night in His temple.' They know no broken friendships there. They have no ruined hearts, no blighted prospects.

* * * * *

All inward evils will have been removed by the perfect sanctification wrought in them by the Holy Ghost. No evil of heart, of unbelief in departing from the living God, shall vex them in Paradise; no suggestions of the arch enemy shall be met and assisted by the uprisings of iniquity within. They shall never be led to think hardly of God, for their hearts shall be all love; sin shall have no sweetness to them, for they shall be perfectly purified from all depraved desires. There shall be no lusts of the eye, no lusts

of the flesh, no pride of life to be snares to their feet. Sin is shut out, and they are shut in. . . .

All fear of change also has been for ever shut out. They know that they are eternally secure. . . .

Why should they weep, when every desire is gratified? They cannot wish for anything which they shall not have. Eye and ear, heart and hand, judgment, imagination, hope, desire, will, every faculty shall be satisfied. All their capacious powers can wish they shall continually enjoy. Though 'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him,' yet we know enough, by the revelation of the Spirit, to understand that they are supremely blessed. The joy of Christ, which is an infinite fulness of delight, is in them. They bathe themselves in the bottomless, shoreless sea of Infinite Beatitude.

Still, dear friends, this does not quite account for the fact, that all tears are wiped from their eyes. I like better the text which tells us that *God* shall do it, and I want you to think with me, of fountains of tears which exist in heaven, so that the celestial ones must inevitably weep if God did not by a perpetual miracle take away their tears.—*No Tears in Heaven*, No. 643.

XI.

*trends in
down* | HOW surprised we shall be to meet in heaven some whom we did not love on earth! We would not commune with them at the Lord's table. We would not own that they were Christians. We looked at them very askance if we saw them in the street. We were jealous of all their operations. We suspected their zeal as being nothing better than rant, and we looked upon their best exertions as having sinister motives at the bottom. We said many hard things, and felt a great many more than we said. When we shall see these unknown and unrecognised brethren in heaven, will not their presence naturally remind us of our offences against Christian love and spiritual unity? I cannot suppose a perfect man, looking at another perfect man, without regretting that he ever ill-treated him: it seems to me to be the trait of a gentleman, a Christian, and of a perfectly sanctified man above all others, that he should regret having misunderstood, and misconstrued, and misrepresented one who was as dear to Christ as himself. I am sure as I go round among the saints in heaven, I cannot (in the natural order of things) help feeling 'I did not assist you as I ought to have done. I did not sympathise with you as I ought to have done. I spoke a hard word to you. I was estranged from you;' and I think you would all have to feel the same; inevitably you must if it were not that by

some heavenly means, I know not how, the eternal God shall so overshadow believers with the abundant bliss of His own self that even that cause of tears shall be wiped away.

Has it never struck you, dear friends, that if you go to heaven and *see your dear children left behind unconverted*, it would naturally be a cause of sorrow? When my mother told me that if I perished she would have to say 'Amen' to my condemnation, I knew it was true, and it sounded very terrible, and had a good effect on my mind; but at the same time I could not help thinking, 'Well, you will be very different from what you are now,' and I did not think she would be improved. I thought, 'Well, I love to think of your weeping over me far better than to think of you as a perfect being, with a tearless eye, looking on the damnation of your own child.' It really is a very terrible spectacle, the thought of a perfect being looking down upon hell, for instance, as Abraham did, and yet feeling no sorrow; for you will recollect that, in the tones in which Abraham addressed the rich man, there is nothing of pity, there is not a single syllable which betokens any sympathy with him in his dreadful woes; and one does not quite comprehend that perfect beings, God-like beings, beings full of love, and everything that constitutes the glory of God's complete nature, should yet be unable to weep, even over hell itself; they cannot weep over their own children lost and ruined!

Now, how is this? If you will tell me, I shall be glad, for I cannot tell you. I do not believe that there will be one atom less tenderness, that there will be one fraction less of amiability, and love, and sympathy—I believe there will be more—but that they will be in some way so refined and purified, that while compassion for suffering is there, detestation of sin shall be there to balance it, and a state of complete equilibrium shall be attained. Perfect acquiescence in the Divine will is probably the secret of it; but it is not my business to guess; I do not know what handkerchief the Lord will use, but I know that He will wipe *all* tears away from their faces, and these tears among them.—*Ibid.*

XII.

in Heaven

‘THEY shall see His face.’ It is the chief blessing of heaven, the cream of heaven, the heaven of heaven, that the saints shall there *see Jesus*. There will be other things to see. Who dare despise those foundations of chrysolite and chrysoprasus and jacinth? Who shall speak lightly of streets of glassy gold and gates of pearl? We would not forget that we shall see angels and seraphim and cherubim; nor would we fail to remember that we shall see apostles, martyrs, and confessors, together with those whom we have walked with and communed with in our Lord while here below. We shall assuredly behold those

of our departed kindred who sleep in Jesus, dear to us here and dear to us still—‘not lost, but gone before.’ But still, for all this, the main thought which we now have of heaven, and certainly the main fulness of it when we shall come there, is just this : we shall see Jesus. . . .

In the beatific vision it is Christ whom they see ; and further, it is His *face* which they behold. They shall not see the skirts of His robe as Moses saw the back parts of Jehovah ; they shall not be satisfied to touch the hem of His garment, or to sit far down at His feet where they can only see His sandals, but they ‘shall see His face ;’ by which I understand two things : first, that they shall literally and physically, with their risen bodies, actually look into the face of Jesus ; and secondly, that spiritually their mental faculties shall be enlarged, so that they shall be enabled to look into the very heart and soul and character of Christ, so as to understand Him, His work, His love, His all in all, as they never understood Him before. They shall literally, I say, see His face, for Christ is no phantom ; and in heaven though Divine, and therefore spiritual, He is still a man, and therefore material like ourselves. The very flesh and blood that suffered upon Calvary is in heaven ; the hand that was pierced with the nail now at this moment grasps the sceptre of all worlds ; that very head which was bowed down with anguish is now crowned with a royal diadem ; and the face that

was so marred is the very face which beams resplendent amidst the thrones of heaven. Into that selfsame countenance we shall be permitted to gaze. . . . We are, the best of us, in our infancy as yet, and know but in part; but we shall be men then, we shall 'put away childish things.' We shall see and know even as we are known; and amongst the great things that we shall know will be this greatest of all, that we shall know Christ: we shall know the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths of the love of Christ that *passeth* knowledge. Oh how delightful it will be then to understand His everlasting love; how without beginning, or ever the earth was, His thoughts darted forward towards His dear ones, whom He had chosen in the sovereignty of His choice, that they should be His for ever! What a subject for delightful meditation will the covenant be, and Christ's suretyship engagements in that covenant when He undertook to take the debts of all His people upon Himself, and to pay them all, and to stand and suffer in their room! And what thoughts shall we have then of our union with Christ—our federal, vital, conjugal oneness! We only talk about these things now, we do not really understand them. We merely plough the surface and gather a topsoil harvest, but a richer subsoil lies beneath. Brethren, in heaven we shall dive into the lowest depths of fellowship with Jesus. 'We shall see His face,' that is, we shall see clearly and plainly all that has to do with our Lord; and

this shall be the topmost bliss of heaven.—*The Heaven of Heaven*, No. 824.

XIII.

WE see not with open sight ; our vision is marred ; but up yonder, among the golden harps, they ‘ know, even as they are known.’ They have no prejudices, but a full desire to know the truth : the bias is gone, and therefore they are able to see His face. Oh blessed thought ! One could almost wish to sit down and say no more, but just roll that sweet morsel under one’s tongue, and extract the essence and sweetness of it. ‘ They see His face.’ There is no long distance for the eye to travel over, for they are near Him ; they are in His bosom ; they are sitting on His throne at His right hand. No withdrawals there to mourn over : their sun shall no more go down. Here He stands behind our wall ; He showeth Himself through the lattices ; but He hides not Himself in heaven. Oh when shall the long summer days of glory be ours, and Jesus our undying joy for ever and ever ? In heaven they never pray—

‘ O may no earth-born cloud arise
To hide Thee from Thy servant’s eyes ;’

but for ever and for aye they bask in the sunlight, or rather, like Milton’s angel, they live in the sun itself. They come not to the sea’s brink to wade into it up to the ankles, but they swim in bliss for ever. In

waves of everlasting rest, in richest, closest fellowship with Jesus, they disport themselves with ineffable delight.

. . . Perfect spirits are always walking with the Lord, for they are always agreed with him. In glory they are all Enochs, walking with God. There for ever and for ever they lie in the bosom of Jesus, in the nearest possible place of communion with Him who redeemed them with His blood. . . .

‘They shall be like Him, for they shall see Him as He is.’ If they see His face they shall be ‘changed from glory to glory’ by this face-to-face vision of the Lord. Beholding Christ, His likeness is photographed upon them; they become in all respects like Him as they gaze upon Him world without end. . . .

Do you regret that your friends have departed? Do you lament that wife, and husband, and child, and father, and grandparent have all entered into their rest? Be not so unkind, so selfish to yourself, so cruel to them. Nay, rather, soldier of the cross, be thankful that another has won the crown before you, and do you press forward to win it too. Life is but a moment: how short it will appear in eternity. Even here hope perceives it to be brief; and though impatience counts it long, yet faith corrects her, and reminds her that one hour with God will make the longest life to seem but a point of time, a mere nothing, a watch in the night, a thing that was and was not, that has come and gone.—*Ibid.*

XIV.

Glorious
Heaven

IT may be that there are degrees in glory. It may be that there are none. I do not attempt to solve the question. But if there are, yet there is no degree below a crowned head in heaven. All the saints have their crowns. 'A crown of life that fadeth not away' is the very lowest portion of the very least saint who is admitted into glory. . . . And every crowned head there will tell you that the very last act of faith before he entered into fruition, was as much based upon grace and as much the fruit of grace as was the first act of believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. There is not a king in heaven that has his crown on any other terms than this, 'by the sovereign grace of God.' . . . In heaven, nobility is given to the noble, and to the upright in character the reward of the righteous; for though it is not of debt, but of grace, yet the pure in heart shall see God, and they that are undefiled in the way shall inherit the blessing. Oh how bright those spirits are that are crowned! The crowns do well demean them: they are without fault before the throne of God. There is no infirmity about their character or imperfection about their constitution. If you should dwell with them a thousand ages you would never hear them speak an idle word, and if you could inspect their hearts with omniscient eyes you would not read therein one godless thought.

They are sanctified perfectly, delivered from every taint of corruption, and now they are like their Lord Himself in holiness of character. . . . You and I, if we believe in Jesus, will soon sit with Jesus, where we shall be crowned! We are poor to-day, obscure, and ignoble: we have no influence, it may be, and possibly are of little account among our fellows; but within a short time, perhaps ere this year or even this month shall have run out its anxious days, we shall be with crowns upon our heads spiritually. We shall be before the throne in spirit, and then by-and-by when the Lord shall come, we shall in body as well as in spirit sit there raised from the dead and made perfect for ever, enjoying the rank of kings and priests unto our God, for we shall reign for ever and ever! . . . There is a throne in heaven that no one can occupy but you, and there is a crown in heaven that no other head can wear but yours, and there is a part in the eternal song that no voice can ever compass but yours, and there is a glory to God that would be wanting if you did not come to render it, and there is a part of infinite majesty and glory that would never be reflected unless you should be there to reflect it! . . . I would like to have a bright crown, bright with many gems of souls turned to righteousness, for they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as stars for ever; but I think the sweetness will be to have a bright crown to lay at His feet, not for the sake of wearing it but giving it, if

thereby a saved one might give honour to his Saviour. You will notice they do not attempt to put the crown upon the Lord's head. No, we cannot add to His splendour! He is infinitely glorious! Without creatures, without servants, without saints, He is glorious: we cannot add to His glory; we can but lay our crowns at His feet. We cast them at the feet, though we cannot put them on the monarch's head. And would not we wish to have as bright a crown as possible, for the sake of placing it there. Oh, fight, thou soldier of Christ, and bear hardness, that thy crown may be a precious one.—*Royal Homage, Nos. 1, 101-2.*

XV.

It is a great truth that you will rise again; it is a sweeter truth that 'you will be 'ever with the Lord.' There is some consolation also in the fact that we shall meet our departed brethren when we all shall be caught up together in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air. Blissful will be the general assembling of the redeemed, never again to be broken up; the joy of meeting never to part again is a sweet remedy for the bitterness of separation. There is great comfort in it, but the main stress of consolation does not lie even there. It is pleasant to think of the eternal fellowships of the godly above, but the best of all is the promised fellowship with our Lord,—'So shall

we ever be with the Lord.' Whatever else you draw comfort from, neglect not this deep, clear, and overflowing well of delight. There are other sources of good cheer in connection with the glory to be revealed, for heaven is a many-sided joy; but still none can excel the glory of communion with Jesus Christ, wherefore comfort one another in the first place, and most constantly, with these words, 'So shall we ever be with the Lord.' . . .

We shall be with the Lord in the strongest possible meaning of that language. So with Him that we shall never mind earthly things again, shall have no more to go into city business, or into the workshop, or into the field; we shall have nought to do but to be engaged for ever with Him in such occupations as shall have no tendency to take us off from communion with Him. We shall be so with Him as to have no sin to becloud our view of Him: the understanding will be delivered from all the injury which sin has wrought in it, and we shall know Him even as we are known. We shall see Him as a familiar friend, and sit with Him at His marriage feast. We shall be with Him so as to have no fear of His ever being grieved and hiding His face from us again. We shall never again be made to cry out in bitterness of spirit, 'Oh, that I knew where I might find Him.' We shall always know His love, always return it, and always swim in the full stream of it, enjoying it to the full. There will be no lukewarmness to mar our

fellowship. He shall never have to say to us, 'I would thou wert either cold or hot.' There shall be no weariness to suspend our ceaseless bliss : we shall never have to cease from fellowship with Him, because our physical frame is exhausted through the excessive joy of our heart ; the vessel will be strengthened to hold the new wine. No doubts shall intrude into our rest, neither doctrinal doubts nor doubts about our interest in Him, for we shall be so consciously with Him as to have risen ten thousand leagues above that gloomy state. We shall know that He is ours, for His left hand shall be under our head and His right hand shall embrace us, and we shall be with Him beyond all hazard of any remove from Him. The chief blessedness seems to me to lie in this, that we shall be with Him and with Him always. . . . No break shall ever occur in the intimate communion of the saints with Christ. Here we know that our high days and bright Sabbaths, with their sweetest joys, must have their eventides, and then come the work-days with the burden of the week upon them ; but there the Sabbath is eternal, the worship endless, the praise unceasing, the bliss unbounded. 'For ever with the Lord.' Speak ye of a thousand years of reigning ? What is that compared with 'for ever with the Lord' ? The millennium is little compared with 'for ever'—a millennium of millenniums would be nothing to it. There can come no end to us and no end to our bliss, since

there can be no end to Him—‘because I live, ye shall live also.’

‘For ever with the Lord’—What will it mean? I remember a sermon upon this text by a notable preacher, of which the heads were as follows—‘For ever life, for ever light, for ever love, for ever peace, for ever rest, for ever joy.’ What a chain of delights! What more can heart imagine or hope desire? Carry those things in your mind and you will get, if you can drink into them, some idea of the blessedness which is contained in being for ever with the Lord; but still recollect these are only the fruits, and not the root of the joy. Jesus is better than all these. His company is more than the joy which comes out of it. I do not care so much for ‘life for ever,’ nor for ‘light for ever,’ as I do for ‘for ever with the Lord.’ Oh, to be with Him! I ask no other bliss, and cannot imagine aught more heavenly. Why, the touch of the hem of His garment healed the sick woman; the sight of Him was enough to give life to us when we were dead! What, then, must it be to be with Him actually, consciously, and always? to be with Him no more by faith, but in very deed with Him for ever? My soul is ready to swoon away with too much joy as she drinks even in her shallow measure into the meaning of this thought, and I dare not venture further. I must leave you to muse your souls into it, for it needs quiet thought and room for free indulgence of holy imagination till you make

your soul to dream of this excess of joy. 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit.'

. . . Is Christ exalted? Oh, how loftily is He lifted up to sit upon a glorious high throne for ever! But you shall sit upon His throne with Him and share His exaltation as you have shared His humiliation. Oh, the delight of thus being joint heirs with Christ, and with Him in the possession of all that He possesses. What is heaven? It is the place which His love suggested, which His genius invented, which His bounty provided, which His royalty has adorned, which His wisdom has prepared, which He himself glorifies; in that heaven you are to be with Him for ever. You shall dwell in the King's own palace. Its gates of pearl and streets of gold shall not be too good for you. You who love Him are to abide for ever with Him, not near Him in a secondary place, as a servant lives at the lodge gate of his master's mansion, but with Him in the self-same palace in the metropolis of the universe.—*For ever with the Lord, Nos. 1,373-4.*

XVI.

THEY rest from their labours in the sense that they *Rest in* are no longer subject to the *new* toil of labour. Whatever

they do in heaven will yield them refreshment and never cause them weariness. As some birds are said to rest upon the wing, so do the saints find in holy activity their serenest repose. They serve Him day and night in His temple, and therein they rest. Even as on earth by wearing our Lord's yoke we find rest unto our souls, so in the perfect obedience of heaven complete repose is found. . . .

Their rest is perfect. I do not know whether the idea of rest is cheering to all of you, but to some of us whose work exceeds our strength it is full of pleasantness. Some have bright thoughts of service hereafter, and I hope we all have, but to those who have more to do for Christ than the weary brain can endure,—the prospect of a bath in the ocean of rest is very pleasant. . . .

Good works follow Christians, and they will be rewarded. The rewards of heaven will be all of grace ; but there will be rewards. You cannot read the Scripture without perceiving that the Lord first gives us good works, and then in His grace rewards us for them. There is a 'Well done, good and faithful servant,' and there is a proportionate allotment of reward to the man who was faithful with five talents and the man who was faithful with two. You who live for Jesus, may be quite certain that your life will be recompensed in the world to come. I repeat it, the reward will not be of debt, but of grace, but a reward there will be. Oh, the joy of knowing,

when you are gone, that the truth you preached is living still ! Methinks the apostles since they have been in heaven must often have looked down on the world, and marvelled at the work which God helped twelve poor fishermen to do, and they must have felt a growing blessedness as they have seen nations converted by the truth which they preached in feebleness. What must be the joy of a pastor in glory to find his spiritual children coming in one by one ! Methinks, if I may, I shall go down to the gate and linger there to look for some of you. Ay, not a few shall I welcome as my children there, blessed be the name of the Lord ; but what a joy it will be !—*A Voice from Heaven, No. 1,219.*

XVII.

OH, it needs but little alteration in the true saint below to make him a saint above. So slight the change that in an instant it is accomplished. ‘ Absent from the body, and present with the Lord.’ The work has proceeded so far that it only remains for the Master to give the last touch to it, and we shall be meet for glory, and shall enter into the heavenly rest with capacities of joy as suitable for heaven as the capacities of those who have been there these thousand years. . . .

The saints above with all their bliss must wait for their resurrection until we also shall have come out

of great tribulation ; like ourselves they are waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body. Until all who were predestinated to be conformed to the image of the firstborn shall have been so conformed, the Church cannot be complete. We are linked to the glorified by bonds of indispensable necessity. We think that we cannot do without them, and that is true ; but they also cannot do without us. ‘As the body is one and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body ! so also is Christ.’ How closely this brings us together. Those for whom we sorrow cannot be far away, since we are all ‘the body of Christ and members in particular.’ . . . How little death prevents actual intercourse it is impossible for us to tell. . . . God has not revealed these things to us, and it is not for us to go dreaming about them, for we may dream ourselves into grievous errors, if we once indulge our fancies. We know nothing about the commerce of the glorified with earth, but we do know that all departed saints are supremely blest, and that they are with Christ ; and if they be with Christ, and we are with Christ, we cannot be far from each other. We meet all the saints of every age whenever we meet with God in Christ Jesus. In fellowship with Jesus ye are come unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born,

whose names are written in heaven, and to the spirits of just men made perfect. It is impossible to restrict our communion with the people of God by the bounds of sect, race, country, or time, for we are vitally one with them all. Come, brethren, let us join our hands with those who have gone before, and let us with equal love join hands with those below, who before long will be numbered with the self-same company. Death has removed part of the family to an upper room, but we are one family still : there may be two brigades, but we are one army ; we may feed in two pastures, but we are only one flock ; we may dwell awhile in separate habitations, but one homestead will ere long receive us all.—*Saints in Heaven and Earth one Family*, No. 1,249.

XVIII.

WE too often think of the saints that have gone before as if they were men of another race from ourselves, capable of nobler things, endowed with graces which we cannot reach, and adorned with holiness impossible to us. The mediæval artists were wont to paint the saints with rings of glory about their heads, but indeed they had no such halos ; their brows were furrowed with care even as ours, and their hair grew grey with grief. Their light was within, and we may have it ; their glory was by grace, and the same grace is available for us. They were men of like passions

with ourselves, 'our brethren,' though a little elder born. . . .

We find that these warriors all *overcame*, for heaven is not for those who fight merely, but for those who overcome. 'He that overcometh shall inherit all things.' . . . It is a theme for gladness in heaven that they did fight and resist and overcome. Those white robes mean victories, so do those palms; but there could not have been victories if there had never been conflicts. There is joy among the angels, for they had their conflict when they stood firm against temptation, and did not swerve when the dragon's tail swept away a third part of the stars of heaven: but ours will be a victory peculiarly sweet, a song especially melodious, because our battle has been peculiarly severe. We fell, we rose again, we were kept, upheld, sustained, and enabled to overcome at last, and therefore will we rejoice for ever before the throne of God.—*How they Conquered the Dragon*, Nos. I, 236-7.

XIX.

sin over
WHENEVER some of us enter an assembly of believers, they recognise and welcome us: the like reception awaits us above! We shall be quite at home in heaven, when we get there. Some of you have more friends in heaven than on earth. How few are left of your former friends, compared with the many

who have gone above. In the day when you enter into heaven, you will perceive that the Church is one family, for they will welcome you heartily, and recognise in you a brother and a friend, and so, together with them, you shall adore your Lord. . . . What a family we shall be when we all rise together, and all the changed ones stand with us, all of one race, all regenerate, all clothed in the white robe of Jesus' righteousness! What a family! What a meeting it will be! . . .

My soul anticipates that grandest of all family meetings, when all the chosen shall assemble around the throne of God. It is but a little while, and it shall come; it is but the twinkling of an eye, and it shall all be matter of fact. We talk of time, as though it were a far-reaching thing; I appeal to you grey heads who know what seventy years mean; are they not gone as a watch in the night? Well, let the waiting be prolonged for ten thousand years, if the Lord pleases; the ten thousand years will end, and then for ever and for ever we shall be as one family where Jesus is. This hope should cheer us. Death, where is thy sting? Grave, where is thy victory? Cheered by the prospect of an everlasting reunion, we defy thee to sadden us! Encouraged by the glory which God has decreed, we laugh at thy vain attempts to make breaches in the ranks of the one and indivisible family of the living God!—*Saints in Heaven and Earth one Family*, No. 1,249.

XX.

FOR him there are no nights ; and if there be times of solitude and rest, he is ever filled with ecstatic joy. His river floweth ever full of bliss, without one pebble of sorrow over which it ripples ; he has no aching conscience, no ‘aching void the world can never fill.’ He is supremely blessed, satisfied with favour, and full with the goodness of the Lord. . . . He lives in a house that can never hasten to decay ; he wears a crown the glister of which shall never be dim ; he has a garment which shall never wax old ; he has bliss that can never depart from him, nor he from it. He is now firmly set, like a pillar of marble in the temple of God. The world may rock, the tempest may sway it like the cradle of a child ; but there, above the world, above the perpetual revolution of the stars, the Christian stands secure and immovable.

. . . Suns have their spots, skies have their clouds, and Christians have their sorrows too. But oh ! how different will the state of the righteous be up there, from the state of the believer here ! Here the Christian has to suffer anxiety. He is anxious to serve his Master, to do his best in his day and generation. His constant cry is—‘Help me to serve Thee, O my God,’ and he looks out, day after day, with a strong desire for opportunities of doing good. Ah ! if he be an active Christian, he will have much labour, much

toil, in endeavouring to serve his Master ; and there will be times when he will say, ' My soul is in haste to be gone ; I am not wearied of the labour, I am wearied in it. To toil thus in the sun, though for a good Master, is not the thing that just now I desire.' Ah ! Christian, the day shall soon be over, and thou shalt no longer have to toil ; the sun is nearing the horizon ; it shall rise again with a brighter day than thou hast ever seen before. There, up in heaven, Luther has no more to face a thundering Vatican ; Paul has no more to run from city to city, and continent to continent ; there Baxter has no more to toil in his pulpit, to preach with a broken heart to hard-hearted sinners ; there no longer has Knox to ' cry aloud and spare not ' against the immoralities of the false Church ; there no more shall be the strained lung, and the tired throat, and the aching eye ; no more shall the Sunday-school teacher feel that his Sabbath is a day of joyful weariness ; no more shall the tract distributor meet with rebuffs. No, there, those who have served their country and their God, those who have toiled for man's welfare, with all their might, shall enter into everlasting rest. Sheathed is the sword, the banner is furled, the fight is over, the victory won ; and they rest from their labours.

. . . There his weary head shall be crowned with unfading light. There the ship that has been speeding onward shall furl its sails in the port of eternal bliss. There he who like an arrow has sped his

way, shall be fixed for ever in the target. There we who like fleeting clouds were driven by every wind, shall gently distil in one perennial shower of everlasting joy. There is no progress, no motion there ; they are at rest, they have attained the summit of the mountain, they have ascended to their God and our God. Higher they cannot go ; they have reached the *Ultima Thule*, there are no fortunate islands beyond ; this is life's utmost end of happiness ; and they furl their sails, rest from their labours, and enjoy themselves for aye. There is a difference between the progress of earth and the perfect fixity of the rest of heaven.—*Heavenly Rest, No. 133.*

TEN VIEWS OF HEAVEN.

ALEXANDER MACLAREN, D.D.

I.

WHAT we know, and love, and believe, and rejoice in, here on earth, is the manna in the wilderness ; and we are waiting for the settled food of the permanent home. We have here the prelibation, the first taste and draught, but the full cup is kept for us above. We wet our lips in the midst of the hot struggle upon earth, with the sacred joys, hastily quaffed, of still communion and thankful devotion ; but the full draught, the best wine, is kept till we get yonder, when the perfecting of the spirit comes. Here we drink of the brook by the way, in the heat of the battle and the pursuit ; there we shall lift up the head, and drink of ‘the river of the water of life that proceedeth out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.’ The best of earth is the shadow of heaven. The shadow is like the substance ; but oh, the substance !—‘eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath entered into the heart of man to conceive, the

NOTE.—The sections of this chapter are taken from the volumes of Dr. Maclaren’s Sermons issued by Messrs. Macmillan & Co., and are reprinted by permission of the Publishers.

things that God hath prepared for them that love Him.' Only, we can say, all this that a Christian has here, when into his expanding heart there come those sweet and angel visitants of joy and love, who are but the outriders and fair messengers of the great band of the heavenly host ; all this is but the ' earnest of the inheritance,' and bears the same proportion to its perfect fulness that the handful of turf does to the broad acres and the fertile lands of which it is the first instalment and certain guarantee.—*The Holy Spirit, the Earnest of the Inheritance.*

II.

THERE is no inheritance of heaven without sonship ; because all the blessings of that future life are of a spiritual character. The joy, and the rapture, and the glory of that higher and better life, has, of course, connected with it certain changes of bodily form, certain changes of local dwelling, certain changes which could perhaps be granted equally to a man, of whatever sort he was. But, friends, it is not the golden harps, not the pavement of ' glass mingled with fire,' not the cessation from work, not the still composure and changeless indwelling, not the society even, that makes the heaven of heaven. All these are but the embodiments and rendering visible of the inward thing, a soul at peace with God in the depths of its being, an eye which gazes upon the Father, and a heart which

wraps itself in His arms. Heaven is no heaven except in so far as it is the possession of God. That saying of the Psalmist is not an exaggeration, nor even a forgetting of the other elements of future blessedness, but it is a simple statement of the literal fact of the case, 'I have none in heaven but Thee!' God is the heritage of His people. To dwell in His love, and to be filled with His light, and to walk for ever in the glory of His sunlit face, to do His will, and to bear His character stamped upon our foreheads—*that* is the glory and the perfectness to which we are aspiring. Do not then rest in the symbols that show us, darkly and far off, what that future glory is. Do not forget that the picture is a shadow. Get beneath all these figurative expressions, and feel that whilst it may be true that for us in our present earthly state, there can be no higher, no purer, no more spiritual nor any truer representation of the blessedness which is to come, than those which couch it in the forms of earthly experience, and appeal to sense as the minister of delight—yet all these things are *representations*, and not adequate presentations. The inheritance of the servants of the Lord is the Lord Himself, and they dwell in Him, and *there* is their joy.—*Sons and Heirs.*

III.

GOD takes all these years of life, and all the sore trials and afflictions that belong inevitably to an earthly career, and works them in, into the blessedness that *shall* come. If a fair measure of the greatness of any result of productive power be the length of time that was taken for getting it ready, we can dimly conceive what that joy must be for which seventy years of strife, and pain, and sorrow, are but a momentary preparation; and what must be the weight of that glory which is the counterpoise and consequence to the afflictions of this lower world. The further the pendulum swings on the one side, the further it goes up on the other. The deeper God plunges the comet into the darkness, out yonder, the closer does it come to the sun at its nearest distance, and the longer does it stand basking and glowing in the full blaze of the glory from the central orb. So in *our* revolution, the measure of the distance from the farthest point of our darkest earthly sorrow *to* the throne, may help us to the measure of the closeness of the bright, perfect, perpetual glory above, when we are *on* the throne: for if so be that we are sons, we *must* suffer with Him; if so be that we suffer, we *must* be glorified together!—*Suffering with Christ.*

IV.

THE present life of departed saints is fuller and nobler than that which they possessed on earth. They are even now, whatever be the details of their condition, '*the spirits* of just men made perfect.' As yet the body is not glorified—but the *spirits* of the perfected righteous are now parts of that lofty society whose head is Christ, whose members are the angels of God, the saints on earth, and the equally conscious redeemed who 'sleep in Jesus.' . . . They have close fellowship with Christ; then, they are separated from this present body of weakness, of dishonour, of corruption; then, they are withdrawn from all the trouble, and toil, and care of this present life; and then, and not least surely, they have death behind them, not having that awful figure standing on their horizon waiting for them to come up with it! . . . What a wondrous advance on the life of earth they reveal if we think of them! They are closer to Christ; they are delivered from the body, as a source of weakness; as a hinderer of knowledge; as a dragger-down of all the aspiring tendencies of the soul; as a source of sin; as a source of pain. They are delivered from all the necessity of labour which is agony, of labour which is disproportionate to strength, of labour which often ends in disappointment, of labour which is wasted so often in mere keeping life in, of labour

which at the best is a curse, though it be a merciful curse too. They are delivered from that 'fear of death' which, though it be stripped of its sting, is never extinguished in any soul of man that lives; and they can smile at the way in which that narrow and inevitable passage bulked so large before them all their days, and after all, when they came to it, was so slight and small! If these be parts of the life of them that 'sleep in Jesus'—if they are fuller of knowledge, fuller of wisdom, fuller of love, and capacity of love, and object of love; fuller of holiness, fuller of energy, and yet full of rest from head to foot; if all the hot tumult of earthly experience is stilled and quieted, all the fever beating of this blood of ours for ever at an end; all the 'slings and arrows of outrageous fortune' done with for ever; and if the calm face which we looked last upon, and out of which the lines of sorrow, and pain, and sickness melted away, giving it a nobler nobleness than we had ever seen upon it in life, is only an image of the restful and more blessed being into which they have passed,—if the dead are thus, then 'Blessed are the dead!' . . .

Sleep is *rest*. . . . Sleep is the cessation of all connection with the external world. . . . But sleep is not unconsciousness, sleep does not touch the spirit. Sleep sets us free from relations to the outer world; but the soul works as hard, though in a different way, when we slumber as when we wake.

People who know what it is to dream, ought never to fancy that when the Bible talks about death as sleep, it means to say to us that death is unconsciousness. By no means. Strip the man of the disturbance that comes from a fevered body, and he will have a calmer soul. Strip him of the hindrances that come from a body which is like an opaque tower around his spirit, with only a narrow slit here and a narrow door there—five poor senses, with which he can come into connexion with an outer universe : and, then surely, the spirit will have wider avenues out to God, and larger powers of reception, because it has lost the earthly tabernacle which, just in proportion as it brought the spirit into connexion with the earth to which the tabernacle belongs, severed its connexions with the heavens that are above. They who have died in Christ live a fuller and a nobler life, by the very dropping away of the body ; a fuller and nobler life, by the very cessation of care, change, strife and struggle ; and, above all, a fuller and nobler life, because they ‘sleep *in Jesus*,’ and are gathered into His bosom, and wake with Him yonder beneath the altar, clothed in white robes, and with palms in their hands, ‘waiting the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body.’ . . . Though the present state of the departed in Christ is a state of calm blessedness, a state of perfect communion, a state of rest and satisfaction ;—yet it is not the final and perfect state, either. . . .

‘God giveth His beloved sleep ;’ and in that peaceful sleep, realities, not dreams, come round their quiet rest, and fill their conscious spirits and their happy hearts with blessedness and fellowship. And when thus lulled to sleep in the arms of Christ they have rested till it please Him to accomplish the number of His elect, then, in His own time, He will make the eternal morning to dawn, and the hand that kept them in their slumber shall touch them into waking, and shall clothe them when they arise according to the body of His own glory ; and they looking into His face, and flashing back its love, its light, its beauty, shall each break forth into singing as the rising light of that unsetting day touches their transfigured and immortal heads, in the triumphant thanksgiving, ‘I am satisfied, for I awake in Thy likeness.’—*The Living Dead.*

V.

JUST as the Christian life here on earth is in a very true sense a state of never thirsting any more, because we *have* Christ, and yet in another sense is a state of continual longing and desire,—so the Christian and glorified life in heaven, in one view of it, is the removal of all that thirst which marked the condition of man upon earth, and in another is the perfecting of all those aspirations and desires. Thirst, as longing, is eternal ; thirst, as aspiration after God, is the

glory of heaven ; thirst, as desire for more of Him, is the very condition of the celestial world, and the element of all its blessedness. That future life gives us two elements, an infinite God, and an indefinitely expansible human spirit : an infinite God to fill, and a soul to be filled, the measure and the capacity of which has no limit set to it that we can see. What will be the consequence of the contact of these two ? Why this, for the first thing, that always, at every moment of that blessed life, there shall be a perpetual fruition, a perpetual satisfaction, a deep and full fountain filling the whole soul with the refreshment of its waves and the music of its flow. And yet, and yet,—though at every moment in heaven we shall be satisfied, filled full of God, full to overflowing in all our powers,—yet the very fact that the God who dwells in us, and fills our whole natures with unsullied and perfect blessedness, is an infinite God ; and that we in whom the infinite Father dwells, are men with souls that can grow, and can grow for ever,—will result in this, that at every moment our capacities will expand ; that at every moment, therefore, the desire will grow and spring afresh ; that at every moment God will be seen unveiling, undreamed-of beauties, and revealing hitherto unknown heights of blessedness before us ; and that the sight of that transcendent, unapproached, unapproachable, and yet attracting and transforming glory, will draw us onward as by an impulse from above, and the pos-

session of some portion of it will bear us upward as by a power from within ; and so, nearer, nearer, ever nearer to the throne of light, the centre of blessedness, the growing, and glorifying, and greatening souls of the perfectly and increasingly blessed shall mount up with wings as eagles. Heaven is endless longing, accompanied with an endless fruition—a longing which is blessedness, a longing which is life!—*Thirsting for God.*

VI.

HEAVEN is the earthly life of a believer glorified and perfected. If here we by faith enter into the beginning of rest, yonder, through death with faith, we shall enter into the perfection of it. . . . Heaven will be for us, rest in work and work that is full of rest. . .

The heaven of all spiritual natures is not idleness. Man's delight is activity. The loving heart's delight is obedience. The saved heart's delight is grateful service. The joys of heaven are not the joys of passive contemplation, of dreamy remembrance, of perfect repose; but they are described thus, 'They rest not day nor night.' 'His servants serve Him, and see His face.'

Yes, my brother, heaven is perfect '*rest.*' God be thanked for all the depth of unspeakable sweetness which lies in that one little word, to the ears of all the weary and the heavy laden." God be thanked

that the calm clouds which gather round the western, setting sun, and stretch their unmoving loveliness in perfect repose, and are bathed through and through with unflashing and tranquil light, seem to us in our busy lives and in our hot strife like blessed prophets of our state when we, too, shall lie cradled near the everlasting, unsetting sun, and drink in, in still beauty of perpetual contemplation, all the glory of His face, nor know any more wind and tempest, rain and change. Rest in heaven, rest in God! Yes, but work is rest! Ah, that our hearts should grow up into an energy of love of which we know nothing here, and that our hands should be swift to do service, beyond all that could be rendered on earth,—that, never wearying, we should for ever be honoured by having work that never becomes toil nor needs repose; that, ever resting, we should ever be blessed by doing service which is the expression of our loving hearts, and the offering of our grateful and greatened spirits, joyful to us and acceptable to God,—*that* is the true conception of ‘the rest that remaineth for the people of God.’ Heaven is waiting for us—like God’s, like Christ’s—still in all its work, active in all its repose.—*Entrance into God’s Rest.*

VII.

‘THERE the veil which draped the perfect likeness, and gave but dim hints through its heavy swathings

of the outline of immortal beauty that lay beneath, shall fall away. No longer befooled by shadows, we shall possess the true substance ; no longer bedazzled by shows, we shall behold the reality.

And seeing God we shall be satisfied. With all lesser joys the eye is not satisfied with seeing, but to look on Him will be enough. Enough for mind and heart, wearied and perplexed with partial knowledge and imperfect love ; enough for eager desires, which thirst after all draughts from other streams ; enough for will, chafing against lower lords and yet longing for authoritative control ; enough for all my being—to see God. Here we can rest after all wanderings, and say, ‘I travel no further ; here will I dwell for ever—I shall be satisfied.’—*The Two Awakings.*

VIII.

THE law of the transformation is the same for earth and for heaven. Here we see Him in part, and beholding grow like. There we shall see Him as He is, and the likeness will be complete. . . . As with Him, so with us ; the indwelling glory shall come to the surface, and the countenance shall shine as the light, and the garments shall be ‘white as no fuller on earth can white them.’ Nor shall that be a fading splendour, nor shall we fear as we enter into the cloud, nor, looking on Him, shall flesh bend beneath the burden, and the eyes become drowsy, but we

shall be as the Lawgiver and the Prophet who stood by Him in the lambent lustre, and shone with a brightness above that which had once been veiled on Sinai. We shall never vanish from His side, but dwell with Him in the abiding temple which He has built, and there, looking upon Him for ever, our happy souls shall change as they gaze, and behold Him more perfectly as they change, for 'we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.'—*Transformation by Beholding.*

IX.

IN all the regions of that heavenly state, there shall be no jarring will, no reluctant submission. . . . There shall be one will in heaven. 'There shall be no more sea,' for 'His servants shall serve Him,' and the noise of the waves has died away for ever. . . .

The old, old figure which all the world, generation after generation in its turn, has spoken, is a scriptural one as well, and enters into the fulness of 'the meaning of this passage before us. Life is a voyage over a turbulent sea ; changing circumstances come rolling after each other, like the undistinguishable billows of the great ocean. Tempests and storms rise. There is wearisome sailing, no peace, but 'ever climbing up the climbing wave.' *That* is life ! But for all that, friends, there is an end to it some day ; and it is worth

while for us to think about our 'island home, far, far beyond the sea.' Surely some of us have learned the weariness of this changeful state, the weariness of the work and voyage of this world. Surely some of us are longing to find anchorage whilst the storm lasts, and a haven at the end. There *is* one, if only you will believe it, and set yourselves towards it. There is an end to all 'the weary oar, the weary wandering fields of barren foam.' On the shore stands the Christ; and there is rest *there*. *There* is no more sea, but unbroken rest, unchanging blessedness, perpetual stability of joy, and love in the Father's house.—*No more Sea.*

X.

THE Word who dwelt among us, makes His abode in every believing heart, and gathers them all together at last in that great city, round whose flashing foundations no tumult of ocean beats, whose gates of pearl need not be closed against any foes, with whose happy citizens 'God will dwell, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God.'—*The City and River of God.*

THE INTERMEDIATE STATE.

JOHN FOSTER.

I.

I AM always sorry to think of you at the return of winter, which is now once more so fast approaching. *One* of the venerable persons to whom, and for whom, I have so often before expressed this feeling, is now beyond the reach of winters, and all the worse evils of this world. How often he mistakenly expected he should never suffer another winter ; but there was an appointed time to realize his expectations ; and that time is come, and is past ! How full of mystery, and wonder, and solemnity, is the thought of where he may be now, and what his employments, and how divine the rapture of feeling with infinite certainty that he has begun a never-ending life of progressive joy and glory ! The consideration of this will be an animated consolation to you in the sojourn which you are left behind to finish ; and I hope it will be an incitement

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to each of his relatives to wish and pray ardently, 'Let me die the death of the righteous.'—*To his mother, on the death of his father.*

II.

CAN it be—how is it—what is it—that we are now not inhabitants of the same world—that each has to think of the other as in a perfectly different economy of existence? Whither is she gone—in what manner does she consciously realize to herself the astonishing change—how does she look at herself as no longer inhabiting a mortal tabernacle—in what manner does she recollect her state as only a few weeks since—in what manner does she think, and feel, and act, and communicate with other spiritual beings—what manner of vision has she of God and the Saviour of the world—how does she review and estimate the course of discipline through which she has been prepared for the happy state where she finds herself—in what manner does she look back on *death*, which she has so recently passed through,—and does she plainly *understand* the nature of a phenomenon so awfully mysterious to the view of mortals? How does she remember and feel respecting *us*, respecting *me*? Is she associated with the spirits of her departed son, and two children who died in infancy? Does she indulge with delight a confident anticipation that we shall, after a while, be added

to her society? If she should think of it as, with respect to some of us, many years, possibly, before such an event, does that appear a *long* time in prospect, or has she begun to account of duration according to the great laws of eternity? Earnest imaginings and questionings like these arise without end; and still, still, there is no answer, no revelation. The mind comes again and again up close to the thick black veil; but there is no perforation, no glimpse. She that loved me, and I trust loves me still, will not, cannot, must not, answer me. I can only imagine her to say, 'Come and see; serve our God so that you shall come and share, at no distant time.' One of the most striking circumstances to my thought and feeling is, that, in devotional exercises, though she comes on my mind in a more affecting manner than perhaps ever, *I have no longer to pray for her*. By a momentary lapse of thought I have been, I think, several times on the point of falling into an expression for her as if still on earth; and the instant 'No! no more for *her*,' has been an emotion of pain, and as it were disappointment; till the thought has come 'She needs not; she is now safe, beyond the sphere of mortals and their dangers and wants, in the *possession* of all that prayer implored.'—*On the death of his wife.*

III.

IT is probable that some circumstances of the invisible economy may be of such a nature, so little in analogy with anything within our present experience or knowledge, that they could not be conveyed intelligibly in the language of this world. But there might be presented plainly to our understanding, through that medium, by a messenger from the other world, many things on which a thoughtful spirit would, if permitted, solicit a communication from such a messenger. If we might be allowed to imagine such an exception to a general law, as a brief visit from a departed friend, with permission of making to us some disclosures of the unseen economy, an earnest inquisitiveness, heretofore indulged in vain, might prompt such inquiries as the following :—

Where is it—in what realm of the creation,—and have you an abode fixed to one locality? Do you exist as an absolutely un-embodied spirit; or have you some material vehicle, and if so, of what nature? In what manner was it at your entrance *verified* to you that you were in another world, and with what emotion? Was an angel the conductor? How does the strange phenomenon, *Death*, appear to you, now that you *look back* upon it? What thought or feeling have you respecting your deserted body? What is your mode of perceiving external existence, and to what extent does that perception reach? Do you

retain a vivid and comprehensive remembrance of the world and the life which you have quitted? Are you associated with the friends who preceded you in death? What is the manner of intercommunication? What are specifically your employments? What account do you take of *time*? What new manner of manifestation of the Divine Presence? Is there a *personal* manifestation of Jesus Christ? Have you a sense, a faculty, to perceive angels, as personal objects, analogously to what we should here call a visible appearance? Are you admitted to any personal knowledge of the wise and good of ancient times? Is there an assignment into *classes*? Do the newly arrived acquire immediately an adaptation to the amazing change? Do you still take a peculiar interest for those who were dear to you, whom you have left behind? Have you any intimation how long it will be before they follow? Are you apprised continuously of much, or anything, that is taking place on earth; if so, by what means, and with what feelings? Have you any appointed intervention in the affairs of this world? Is the awful mystery of the Divine Government of this world in any degree cleared up to your view? Is the great intellectual superiority which some have possessed on earth maintained in the other world? Is there a continual progress in knowledge? if so, must not those who have been in the spiritual world centuries, or thousands of years, be so immensely in advance of those recently enter-

ing, as to be almost humiliating to the latter? In what manner is the *retributive* destination signified?—is it by any formal judicial act, or only by a deep internal consciousness? Is the separation so wide between the good and evil that no distinct information of the condition of the one is conveyed to the other; or are they so mutually apprised as our Lord's parable of Dives and Lazarus would seem to intimate? How is maintained your complacency in the appointment to wait an indefinite, but certainly very, very long period, before the attainment of complete and ultimate happiness?—*Letter on the Intermediate State.*

IV.

WHY, then, did Revelation, while answering in the affirmative the question,—Is there a conscious state after death? withhold an answer to these inquiries, which would solicit some knowledge of *the manner and circumstances of it?*

Necessarily we are convinced that this silence is *for the best*; but perhaps not in the sense which the words would at first view seem to import; namely, that the withholding of the information is more conducive to our spiritual interest than the communication of it would have been. For the best, it *must* be in the sense that it is in conformity with the laws by which infinite wisdom and justice govern the world. But

as a depraved race, we are placed under a *punitive* dispensation ; a part of which is, that many things which would be for our good, even our spiritual good, are withheld. . . .

But, that mysterious hereafter !—We must submit to feel that we *are* in the dark ; and have to walk by faith in the mere general fact, of a conscious and retributive state immediately after death ; revealed without definitions, illustrations, and expansion into a field of varieties and specific forms. Still, a contemplative spirit hovers, with insuppressible inquisitiveness, about the dark frontier, beyond which it *knows* that wonderful realities are existing, realities of greater importance to it than the whole world on this side of that limit. We watch for some glimmer through any part of the solemn shade ; but still are left to the faint, dubious resources of analogy, imagination, conjecture ; and are never satisfied with any attempt at a defined conception, shaped by other minds or our own. If it be a conception indistinct and variable, and, so to speak, merely elemental, it does not take strong hold of the imagination ; if it be reduced to a decided and specific delineation, it comes almost inevitably into so near an analogy to our terrestrial condition, that the mind recoils from it, both as being of too familiar and homely an aspect, and as being essentially improbable when we reflect what a mighty difference there *must* be, in the mode and perhaps the scene

of existence, between the present state and that of a disembodied spirit. How changed must be the nature of our relations when we have passed away from under all known laws of the material world, and are received into the spiritual system. The mind has not, therefore, the power to *accept* a scheme which would figure its new mode of existence in close analogy to the present.—*Ibid.*

V.

IT must be a *place*; the existing spirit exists *somewhere*; but whether within even our mundane (solar) system, there can be no surmise, but this—that it would hardly seem probable the spirit should be removed indefinitely far from the world to which it has belonged but a moment before, and which is the old place of sojourn of the order of beings to which it is still inseparably related. And yet what world in our system, under the same physical laws, by the testimony of science, as our own, can be conceived to have any peculiar fitness for the receptacle and abode of *spirits*? One ingenious speculator will have the appointed place to be the sun. In the indulgence of imagination one would, certainly, have less *objection* to that sublime luminary than to any of his inferiors. But how arbitrary must be any such conjecture; and what should be the *peculiar* fitness?

The transfer of the attractive denomination, Paradise, seems to affirm such an analogy as will authorize our assurance that it is as delightful to the dwellers there as the terrestrial Paradise was to man in innocence. And the region and the inhabitants must have as direct an adaptation to each other as the garden of Eden had to the *compound* constitution of man, soul and *body*. But what a strangely different *mode* of adaptation! For how can the properties and phenomena of *place* be adapted to disembodied spirits? If we suppose the place to be rich in the characters of sublimity and beauty, and all other physical qualities displayed in *material* elements and aspects, such as could be taken cognizance of by means of organs of sense like ours, how can they be apprehended by spirits divested of them? And yet we cannot think, either that a place presented to us under the name and image of Paradise can be without some such fair attributes, or that they can be lost on the perceptions of disembodied spirits happily located there. We cannot conceive of it as merely a place to *contain them in*, while they are indifferent to its material glories.

There arises a suggestion whether, in order to a perceptive intimacy with the material characters of the place, it be not necessary that the spirit be invested with some *material vehicle*, to replace the gross mortal body which it has abandoned. And it is an allowable conjecture that it *may* have such a

medium of perception and action, during the interval of waiting;—waiting, in the case of so many of these spirits, so very long—for the resurrection. At the same time it cannot be conceived that even *pure spirits*, if we should suppose *angels* to be such, should not have a most perfect vivid perception of all the fair and magnificent *material* phenomena of the scenes where they are present in execution of their offices. To them such characters of their Master's works cannot be all blank and indifferent. —*Ibid.*

VI.

REDEEMED souls in the intermediate state must be possessed of ample means of happiness, if it were only for this plain reason—that else the long period of their waiting for the final consummation would be insupportable. To those who depart now, or departed recently, it will be a duration of very many ages; and no doubt they know it well. But think of the saints before the deluge, or in the patriarchal ages, foreseeing that consummation at the distance of many thousand years, or at least having now had the actual proof of the long delay. We must not imagine them exercising *patience*, since that implies something endured, suffered; but, to cause them an entire complacency under this immensely protracted delay of their highest felicity,—

to secure them invariably happy in their present time and state, century after century, millennium after millennium—to prevent such earnestness of anticipation as would partake of restlessness ;—to do this, what mighty resources for enjoyment they must possess ! And these resources must be in the activity of the intellectual faculties and the affections ; in attaining truth, in loving goodness, admiring grandeur, adoring the Divinity. Nor can we well conceive they should be in a state of total inactivity in a more *practical* sense ; that they should be, so to speak, *laid aside* in an inert existence, while activity is prevailing, in all probability, through the whole empire of the Almighty. Should it not be probable that the servants of God, of every order, everywhere in the universe, and in every stage of their existence, have something to *do*, some office to execute ? And if such be the vocation of departed human spirits, it might be no violence of conjecture to suppose they may sometimes, some of them, have appointments in a certain connexion with the race here, to which by their nature they still belong, though their immediate mortal relation to it has ceased. . . . Benevolent they certainly are ; and if they *have* active employments assigned them, it cannot be conceived there are any fitter objects of that benevolence than the poor sojourners in the world they have left. At all events, it is to be presumed that the manner in which their faculties, or call them powers, are exercised, must be that which

will make their existence *most worth*, if we may so express it, in the creation,—most worth that they should exist as intelligent beings; and it must be that which will render most service and honour to the Lord of all.—*Ibid.*

VII.

WHAT is life? What is soul? What is even body? How combined? And if we had the means of pursuing the inquiry into our future state, it may be presumed that every mystery would be aggravated upon us. It is true that the great ‘Revealer of secrets’ could have told us, by revelation, some things respecting the future state which we might, in some superficial general manner, have understood. . . . But what we would insist on, is, that all disclosures given of the future state would have been, to us, faint and inefficient information. For, if it had been given in terms merely general, it would have left our conceptions in a state nearly as vague and unsatisfactory as ever, no definite substance; and, in particular and specific terms it could not have been given, without becoming either unintelligible or degraded; for, it must have been given either in terms of very close analogy with our present state,—or in terms (if any such could have been found) fitted and true to the nature of a vastly different economy.—*The Broadmead Lectures.*

THE BEATIFIC VISION.

ROBERT HALL, M.A.

I.

AT the decease of Lazarus, while his sisters were lamenting his loss, 'Jesus wept.' But the sorrow which a Christian feels in such situations is mingled with hope. By the light of faith, he traces his deceased friends into an eternal world. Instead of considering them as lost or extinct, he beholds them still under the eye of Divine Providence. The period of their trial is closed ; they have entered into rest, where, sheltered from the storms of life and the dangers of temptation, their happiness is for ever fixed and unalterable. Their separation is neither final nor complete. The pious living and the pious dead are still one family, under one head ; and when He 'who is their life shall appear, they shall appear with Him in glory.' The friendships which have had virtue and religion for their basis will survive all human ties, outlive the habitable globe, and form, in all probability, a principal part of the happiness of the blessed. . . . Instead of murmuring at such afflictive dispensations as separate us from those we esteem and love, let us employ them as inducements to set our affections on a better world, where we shall shortly join them ; remembering,

that whatever ties of affection are broken by death, are taken from the enjoyments of time to enrich the prospect of eternity.—*Oration at the interment of the Rev. H. Crabb.*

II.

How should we rejoice in the prospect, the certainty rather, of spending a blissful eternity with those whom we loved on earth, of seeing them emerge from the ruins of the tomb, and the deeper ruins of the fall, not only uninjured, but refined and perfected, with every tear wiped from their eyes, standing before the throne of God and the Lamb, *in white robes, and palms in their hands, crying with a loud voice, Salvation to God, that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb, for ever and ever!* What delight will it afford to renew the sweet counsel we have taken together, to recount the toils of combat and the labour of the way, and to approach, not the house, *but* the throne of God, in company, in order to join in the symphony of heavenly voices, and lose ourselves amidst the splendours and fruition of the beatific vision!

III.

THE wheels of nature are not made to roll backward; everything presses on towards eternity; from the

birth of time an impetuous current has set in, which bears all the sons of men towards that interminable ocean. Meanwhile heaven is attracting to itself whatever is congenial to its nature, is enriching itself by the spoils of earth, and collecting within its capacious bosom whatever is pure, permanent, and divine, leaving nothing for the last fire to consume but the objects and the slaves of concupiscence ; while everything which grace has prepared and beautified shall be gathered and selected from the ruins of the world, to adorn that eternal city *which hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it, for the glory of God doth enlighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.*

IV.

THEIR employment is to minister to God in the exalted services of the celestial temple. This is the proper business and happiness of heaven, and in this the holy angels are habitually employed. To contemplate the perfections, to celebrate the praises of the Great Eternal ; to bow before Him in lowly prostrations, and to render Him the honour due unto His wonderful works in nature, providence, and grace, is their proper employ. As more of God is conspicuous in the mystery of redemption than in any other work, this will occupy a proportionable part in their praises. ‘And I beheld,’ saith St. John, ‘and heard the voice of many angels around the

throne, and around the four living creatures, and around the four-and-twenty elders, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.' It is not for us to conceive in what particulars the services of heaven consist, after what manner the glorious Supreme will display Himself, and by what forms of adoration He will be praised. These mysteries are hid from us; 'for who hath ascended up into heaven?' Yet we may be certain they will be, in the highest degree, pure, spiritual, and sublime; the noblest exercise of the most exalted faculties on the greatest and best of Beings.

V.

'I SAW no temple therein,' etc., cannot be intended to insinuate that heaven will not be a place of devotion. It is in every part of the word of God, and in this book in particular, represented as a state of the highest and most exalted devotion. Devotion will there be carried to its highest perfection. The absence of the temple does not denote the absence of devotion: as it is the noblest employment of creatures here, it is impossible to suppose it will be neglected in the heavenly world. Nor is it intended to intimate,

that there will not be most glorious and supernatural manifestations of God in that state. *Having* the glory of *God* is a most distinguishing part of its description. The peculiar presence of God is announced as one of its especial privileges. 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell amongst them.' Contrasting the present with the future state, the apostle says, 'Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face: then shall I see as I am seen, and know as I am known. . . . In heaven, the presence of God will not be restricted to a particular place: it will diffuse itself everywhere; in consequence of which the whole will become holy. There will be no part of it consecrated as a local temple, because the whole will be a temple. As it is said of the sun, that the city will have no need of it, because the Lord God will enlighten it, and the Lamb be the light thereof; so it will be with respect to this temple. The whole will be so illuminated with the glory of God, so adorned with the most impressive indications of His august presence, that there will be no distinction possessed by any part above another. Every region of it will be equally replete with the glory of God, which is the thing chiefly meant by the latter clause of the text, 'The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb will be the temple thereof.' The inhabitants will have no occasion to remove from one place to another, or to approach to a particular spot, in order to behold the

glory of God ; but where they are, they will be alike sensible of His presence, and equally awed and transported by it. None will have occasion to adopt the language of the devout Psalmist, and say, 'When shall I come and appear before God?' for they shall always appear before Him alike ; 'they shall continually behold His face, and serve Him day and night in His temple.'

VI.

No distinction will subsist betwixt the different mansions in our Heavenly Father's house. As all will be equally holy, the same modes of worship will pervade the whole ; and whatever will be suitable to one place will be suitable to all. In this sense, John saw no temple. . . . In the heavenly world, no distinction of sacred times and seasons will be known : no weekly rest, no annual solemnities, will be longer recognized ; the devotion of its blessed inhabitants will be one eternal Sabbath. 'There remaineth a rest' (*a keeping of Sabbath*), saith St. Paul, 'for the people of God.' . . . This declaration is probably intended to intimate, that devotion will no longer form a distinct part of the employment of the heavenly world, but that it will be intimately incorporated with all their actions and sentiments. In the present condition of our being, so many wants arise from the body, so many necessities of a worldly

nature to be provided for, that it is but a small part of their time that many can devote to the offices of religion. We have two worlds with which we are concerned—the world that now is, and that which is to come ; and these give birth to two distinct interests—the interests of the body, and those of the soul. Though the latter are infinitely the most important, the former cannot, and ought not, to be neglected : they demand a large portion of our exertions, and, with too many, absorb the whole of their attention and solicitude. . . . Truly holy persons employ their hands upon the world, and set their hearts on heaven ; but even these find it difficult, amidst the distractions and cares of the present state, to keep their affections set upon the things that are above. Their souls too often cleave unto the dust, and their hearts are sometimes overcharged. Nothing of that nature will be experienced there : God will be all in all. No wants will there remain to be supplied, no dangers to be averted, no provision to be made for futurity. The contemplation and enjoyment of the Great Eternal will present an ample occupation of the mind for ever and ever.

VII.

IT may seem, in our present dark and imperfect state, difficult to conceive how the exercises of the mind

and heart on the blessed God can employ an eternity. But we must remember that the object is infinite ; that the creation is but an atom or a point, compared to the immensity of His being and perfections ; and if, in the survey and examination of the creation, the mind feels such ample scope, we need not wonder if its great Author supply an infinitely wider range of operation, when He lays Himself open to the view of His creatures, and permits them to 'see Him as He is.' When we possess an immediate and intuitive view of His nature and excellences, and no longer see Him through a glass darkly, but face to face, no doubt, the powers of the soul will find full employment, without danger of feeling itself straitened, in Him who is all in all. There are, probably, faculties in the soul which are here either not apparent at all, or are very imperfectly developed. Among these, the powers of action and contemplation will be perfectly combined : the exercise of the reason will not interfere with that of the heart ; but we shall be capable of feeling all the ecstasies of devotion, in conjunction with mental operations, with which it is at present scarcely compatible. We shall not worship at one time, and at another be engaged in active pursuits and employment ; but while we burn with the highest ardours of devotion, we shall be capable of doing the will of God, of executing those mysterious purposes which it is His wish we should accomplish.

VIII.

AT present, the occupations in which we are engaged have no immediate relation to the Deity ; they are capable of being sanctified only by a general intention of pleasing God, while it is impossible to advert incessantly to His presence, or to make Him always the immediate object of our thought. In eternity, the capacity will be so enlarged and extended, that the idea of God will be incessantly impressed, the beams of His glory will perpetually penetrate the heart, and the fire of love will never cease to burn upon the altar.

IX.

THEY that do not belong to Christ are disqualified for heaven, but those that belong to Him have the elementary preparation for that blissful state ; they have that which renders them meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. They are not entirely cured, it is true, of all the infections of sin ; the venom of the old serpent is not expelled : but they are under a restorative process ; they are under the method of cure ; they are taking the medicine which is of sovereign efficacy. All the love and joy that glow with celestial fervour before the throne of the Heavenly Majesty, is only the consummation of seeds like those which are sown in the hearts of

believers : ‘ Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.’ They are sown in their hearts ; and when that which is sown, or is to be sown, shall be matured, Jesus Christ will present unto Himself ‘ a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing.’ And what a spectacle will this be ! how will the saints themselves be astonished at their attainments ! It will require an eternity to know ourselves, much more to know the Fountain whence all these beauties and glories have been derived. Then, indeed, shall we speak of the glory of His kingdom and talk of His power.

X.

WHAT an important blessing is the possession of eternal life, and the resurrection of the dead ! These terms include everlasting felicity in the presence of God ; a privilege ineffable and invaluable, surpassing our apprehension, or any comparison that can be made. To enjoy the smallest portion of this blessing, is to be superior to all the greatness of the present state : the least in the kingdom of heaven is higher than the most exalted of the rulers and the philosophers of the world. We shall shortly see and feel this to be the true representation of the subject. Wicked men shall see it to be so, when, between them and the righteous there is a great gulf fixed ; good men will find it to be so, and their spirits will

even fail within them, when they behold the order of the court of heaven, and the majesty of the kingdom. . . . It is a kingdom, at present, consisting of two parts; there is an upper and a lower province: in the lower province the subjects are required to struggle and fight; when called hence, they shall triumph. Then shall we know what is meant by the glory of this kingdom, when 'God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes,' and when 'the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed us, and lead us to living fountains of water;' when we shall 'rejoice before the throne, and reign for ever and ever.'

XI.

THE choice of Moses was truly wise; it was the only choice wisdom *could* make. Happy are they who choose like him; Canaan shall be for ever theirs. The Land of Promise was but a type, a shadow, of their inheritance; it was a perishable inheritance; it was but a mere span, a moment of happiness and glory, compared with that which shall be revealed, of which, at present, we can only say we know but in part: for 'it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.' A few moments there will banish all earthly trials from your mind; or you shall remember them only to enhance

your bliss. The enemy, like the Egyptians in the Red Sea, shall be seen no more. The trials of the saints shall be left far behind, and sin shall never vex them again. How will this happiness repay all their toil ! how sweet will be the remembrance of the bitterest herbs ! how unspeakable and inconceivable the joy, when they shall be with angels, and justified spirits, and Christ and God, in the kingdom of glory ! We are lost in the contemplation of this sublime subject ; yet we know that future happiness is greater than eye hath seen or ear hath heard.

XII.

WHAT remains for you is infinitely greater than what you possess. ‘Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be ; but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him ; for we shall see Him as He is ! . . . How great, my brethren, are the privileges you enjoy ! Have you any need to struggle and scramble for the perishing riches of this world ? Will you ‘load yourselves with thick clay ?’ Will you murmur and repine if you are disappointed in your expectation of worldly good, or if you are deprived of what you once enjoyed ? Will you forget the inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation ?’ The pledge is

granted to you now. Your Elder Brother, at the right hand of the throne, has taken possession for you. Will you suffer yourselves to be corrupted by the 'lusts of the flesh, and of the eye, and the pride of life,' while you have heaven open to your view, and the promise of eternal life laid before you? It doth not indeed appear at present what you shall be; there is not scope on earth for the display of such glory; the glory of the eternal world must come down, before we can fully know what 'God hath prepared for them that love Him.' Your glory would be too great to be sustained by flesh and blood; these cannot enter into the kingdom but at the redemption of the body. Then shall be the 'manifestation of the sons of God;' the meanest Christian will appear as a glorious temple of the Holy Ghost; every saint will arise and shine as the sun in the kingdom of his Heavenly Father. At His powerful voice, that penetrates the grave and agitates the dust, all shall shine forth with a lustre which will extinguish all sublunary glory. . . . This supports us under the stroke that bereaves us of our dearest friends and relatives. Those who have followed the remains of Christians to the grave, have, amidst their sorrows, nourished heavenly hope, and enjoyed consolation sufficient to make them almost the objects of envy. . . . Their spirits repose in His bosom; even their dust is precious in His sight, and He watches over it till He shall fashion it anew; and, in body and spirit, they

shall be heirs of immortality and partakers of His glory for ever and ever.

XIII.

THERE is joy in the Christian Church on every accession of new converts ; . . . but when it is said that *there is joy in heaven over every repenting sinner*, the assertion is to be understood in a meaning far more just and adequate. Repentance is there weighed in other scales than here. Angels view the change that is effected in a 'sinner's position before God, by repentance, from higher ground,—in all its aspects and dimensions, in all its bearings and consequences. They appreciate the greatness of that happiness which their fallen brethren have lost for ever, which they themselves enjoy, and which is now in reserve for the converted sinner. They taste the joy which is set before him ; they dwell in the glory which is become the object of his desires ; they *know* that whatever may be his present sufferings, they are light and merely for a moment,—they will ere long be exchanged for unspeakable pleasures,—he will have *all his tears wiped away* by God Himself ! Angels penetrate far deeper than it is in the power of the most exalted saints on earth to penetrate ; *the heights and depths, the lengths and breadths*, of that eternity which is the seal and crown of the felicity

promised to every real penitent, which stamps it an eternal felicity,—even *eternal life, the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord*. They have long been engaged in contemplating the beauty of that holiness which dwells in God as its original ; they have long enjoyed Him as their portion, as their all ; they have been exploring the true fountain of happiness through a long succession of ages, and they find it still as fresh and inexhaustible as ever ; they have long basked in the beatific splendours of uncreated light ! They comprehend the mysterious and undefinable value of the soul ; its intense susceptibilities as a rational, moral accountable substance, incapable alike of extinction and unconsciousness through infinite duration : these things are clear to their view, though they are obscure and confused to us, who *are of yesterday and know nothing*,—to us who are *crushed before the moth*.

XIV.

IT is a very solemn consideration, that a part of myself is in eternity ; in the presence, I trust, of the Saviour. How awful will it be, should the branch be saved, and the stock perish !—*On the death of his own son*.

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XV.

I HOPE the period will arrive when we shall spend an eternity together, and look back with mingled wonder and gratitude on all the way the Lord God has led us. What a scene will that present when the mysterious drama shall come to a close, and all the objects of this dark and sublunary state shall be contemplated in the light of eternity!—*Letter to the Rev. Thomas Langdon.*

XVI.

MUCH as the prophets and apostles have said of the glory of Christ, it is impossible for us to form an adequate conception of it: the full revelation of it is reserved for a future state, when, if we are true Christians, “we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” How short is the transition between this and the unseen world! How soon, when God pleases, can He transport His creatures into higher scenes of existence! It is but for Him to draw aside the veil, and objects are presented to the view compared to which, whatever is most admired on earth is mean and contemptible. Every moment we stand upon the confines of an eternal state, and, without dissolving the connexion between soul and body, God can open a passage into the “heaven of heavens.”

WHAT IS HEAVEN?

JOSEPH ADDISON.

OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

WILLIAM COWPER.

THOMAS À KEMPIS.

SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D.

JOHN SHEPPARD.

DANIEL DEFOE.

I.

AS in matters unattainable by reason, and unrevealed in Scripture, it is impossible to argue at all; so in matters concerning which reason can only give a probable guess, and the Scripture has made no explicit discovery, it is, though not impossible to argue at all, yet impossible to argue to any certain conclusion. This seems to me to be the very case with the point in question: reason is able to form many plausible conjectures concerning the possibility of our knowing each other in a future state; and the Scripture has, here and there, favoured us with an expression that looks at least like a slight intimation of it; but because a conjecture can never amount to a proof, and a slight intimation cannot be construed into a positive assertion, therefore I think we can never come to any absolute conclusion upon the subject. We may, indeed, reason about the plausibility of our conjectures, and we may discuss, with great industry and shrewdness of argument, those passages in the Scripture which seem to favour the opinion; but, still, no certain means having been

afforded us, no certain end can be attained; and after all that can be said, it will still be doubtful whether we shall know each other or not.

As to arguments founded upon human reason only, it would be easy to muster up a much greater number on the affirmative side of the question, than it would be worth my while to write, or yours to read. Let us see, therefore, what the Scripture says, or seems to say, towards the proof of it; and of this kind of argument, also, I shall insert but a few of those which seem to me to be the fairest and clearest for the purpose. For, after all, a disputant on either side of this question is in danger of that censure of our blessed Lord, ‘Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God.’

As to parables, I know it has been said, in the dispute concerning the intermediate state, that they are not argumentative; but this having been controverted by very wise and good men, and the parable of Dives and Lazarus having been used by such to prove an intermediate state, I see not why it may not be as fairly used for the proof of any other matter which it seems fairly to imply. In this parable, we see that Dives is represented as knowing Lazarus, and Abraham as knowing them both, and the discourse between them is entirely concerning their respective characters and circumstances upon earth. Here, therefore, our Saviour seems to countenance the notion of a mutual knowledge and re-

collection ; and if a soul that has perished shall know the soul that is saved, surely the heirs of salvation shall know and recollect each other.

In the first Epistle to the Thessalonians, the second chapter, and nineteenth verse, St. Paul says, 'What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For ye are our glory and joy.'

As to the hope which the apostle has formed concerning them, he himself refers the accomplishment of it to the coming of Christ, meaning that then he should receive the recompense of his labours in their behalf; his joy and glory he refers likewise to the same period, both which would result from the sight of such numbers redeemed by the blessing of God upon his ministration, when he should present them before the great Judge, and say, in the words of a greater than himself, 'Lo! I, and the children whom Thou hast given me.' This seems to imply that the apostle should know the converts, and the converts the apostle, at least at the day of judgment ; and if then, why not afterwards?

See also the fourth chapter of that epistle, verses 13, 14, 16, which I have not room to transcribe. Here the apostle comforts them under their affliction for their deceased brethren, exhorting them 'not to sorrow as without hope;' and what is the hope by which he teaches them to support their spirits? Even this, 'that them which sleep in Jesus shall

God bring with Him.' In other words, and by a fair paraphrase surely, telling them they are only taken from them for a season, and that they should receive them at their resurrection.—*William Cowper to his Cousin Mrs. Cowper, April 17, 1766.*

II.

HAVING gone as far as I thought needful to justify the opinion of our meeting and knowing each other hereafter, I find, upon reflection, that I have done but half my business, and that one of the questions you proposed remains entirely unconsidered; viz., 'Whether the things of our present state will not be of too low and mean a nature to engage our thoughts, or make a part of our communications in heaven.'

The common and ordinary occurrences of life, no doubt, and even the ties of kindred and of all temporal interests, will be entirely discarded from amongst that happy society; and possibly even the remembrance of them done away. But it does not therefore follow that our spiritual concerns, even in this life, will be forgotten; neither do I think that they can ever appear trifling to us in any the most distant period of eternity. God, as you say in reference to the Scripture, will be All in All. But does not that expression mean that, being admitted to so

near an approach to our Heavenly Father and Redeemer, our whole nature, the soul and all its faculties, will be employed in praising and adoring Him? Doubtless, however, this will be the case; and if so, will it not furnish out a glorious theme of thanksgiving, to recollect 'the rock whence we were hewn, and the hole of the pit whence we were digged!'—to recollect the time when our faith, which, under the tuition and nurture of the Holy Spirit, has produced such a plentiful harvest of immortal bliss, was as a grain of mustard-seed, small in itself, promising but little fruit, and producing less?—to recollect the various attempts that were made upon it, by the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, and its various triumphs over all, by the assistance of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ? At present, whatever our convictions may be of the sinfulness and corruption of our nature, we can make but a very imperfect estimate either of our weakness or our guilt. Then, no doubt, we shall understand the full value of the wonderful salvation wrought out for us: and it seems reasonable to suppose that, in order to form a just idea of our redemption, we shall be able to form a just one of the danger we have escaped; when we know how weak and frail we were, surely we shall be more able to render due praise and honour to His strength who fought for us; when we know completely the hatefulness of sin in the sight of God, and how deeply we were tainted by it, we shall know how to value the

blood by which we were cleansed as we ought. The twenty-four elders, in the fifth of the Revelation, give glory to God for their redemption out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation. This surely implies a retrospect to their respective conditions upon earth, and that each remembered out of what particular kindred and nation he had been redeemed; and if so, then surely the minutest circumstance of their redemption did not escape their memory. They who triumph over the beast in the fifteenth chapter sing the song of Moses, the servant of God; and what was that song? A sublime record of Israel's deliverance, and the destruction of her enemies in the Red Sea—typical, no doubt, of the song which the redeemed in Sion shall sing to celebrate their own salvation, and the defeat of their spiritual enemies. This, again, implies a recollection of the dangers they had before encountered, and the supplies of strength and ardour they had in every emergency received from the great Deliverer out of all. These quotations do not, indeed, prove that their warfare upon earth includes a part of their converse with each other; but they prove that it is a theme not unworthy to be heard even before the throne of God, and therefore it cannot be unfit for reciprocal communication.

But you doubt whether there is *any* communication between the blessed at all; neither do I recollect any Scripture that proves it, or that bears any rela-

tion to the subject. But reason seems to require it so peremptorily, that a society without social intercourse seems to be a solecism and a contradiction in terms ; and the inhabitants of those regions are called, you know, in Scripture, an innumerable *company*, and an *assembly*, which seems to convey the idea of society as clearly as the word itself. Human testimony weighs but little in matters of this sort, but let it have all the weight it can : I know no greater names in divinity than Watts and Doddridge ; they were both of this opinion, and I send you the words of the latter :—

‘Our *companions in glory* may probably assist us by their wise and good observations, when we come to make the *providence of God*, here upon earth, under the guidance and direction of our Lord Jesus Christ, the *subject of our mutual converse*.’

Thus, my dear cousin, I have spread out my reasons before you for an opinion which, whether admitted or denied, affects not the state or interest of our soul. May our Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, conduct us into His own Jerusalem ; where there shall be no night, neither any darkness at all ; where we shall be free even from innocent error, and perfect in the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ.—*Ibid.*, April 18, 1766.

III.

As the glory of this place is transcendent beyond imagination, so probably is the extent of it. There is light behind light, and glory within glory. How far that space may reach in which God thus appears in perfect majesty, we cannot possibly conceive. Though it is not infinite, it may be indefinite ; and though not immeasurable in itself, it may be so with regard to any created eye or imagination. If He has made these lower regions of matter so inconceivably wide and magnificent for the habitation of mortal and perishable beings, how great may we suppose the courts of His house to be, where He makes His residence in a more especial manner, and displays Himself in the fulness of His glory, among an innumerable company of angels, and spirits of just men made perfect !

This is certain, that our imaginations cannot be raised too high, when we think on a place where Omnipotence and Omniscience have so signally exerted themselves, because that they are able to produce a scene infinitely more great and glorious than what we are able to imagine. It is not impossible but, at the consummation of all things, these outward apartments of nature, which are now suited to those beings who inhabit them, may be taken in and added to that glorious place of which I am here speaking ;

and by that means made a proper habitation for beings who are exempt from mortality, and cleared of their imperfections: for so the Scripture seems to intimate, when it speaks of new heavens and of a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

I have only considered this glorious place with regard to the sight, and imagination, though it is highly probable that our other senses may here likewise enjoy their highest gratifications. There is nothing which more ravishes and transports the soul, than harmony; and we have great reason to believe, from the descriptions of this place in Holy Scripture, that this is one of the entertainments of it. And if the soul of man can be so wonderfully affected with those strains of music which human art is capable of producing, how much more will it be raised and elevated by those in which is exerted the whole power of harmony! The senses are faculties of the human soul, though they cannot be employed during this our vital union, without proper instruments in the body. Why, therefore, should we exclude the satisfaction of these faculties, which we find by experience are inlets of great pleasure to the soul, from among those entertainments which are to make up our happiness hereafter? Why should we suppose that our hearing and seeing will not be gratified with those objects which are most agreeable to them, and which they cannot meet with in these lower regions of nature; 'objects which neither eye hath seen, nor

ear heard, nor can it enter into the heart of man to conceive?' 'I knew a man in Christ' (says St. Paul, speaking of himself) 'about fourteen years ago, (whether in the body I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth); such a one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body or out of the body I cannot tell: God knoweth); how that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not possible for man to utter.' By this is meant, that what he heard was so infinitely different from anything which he had heard in this world, that it was impossible to express it in such words as might convey a notion of it to his hearers.

It is very natural for us to take delight in inquiries concerning any foreign country, where we are some time or other to make our abode; and as we all hope to be admitted into this glorious place, it is both a laudable and useful curiosity, to get what information we can of it, whilst we make use of revelation for our guide. When these everlasting doors shall be opened to us, we may be sure that the pleasures and beauties of this place will infinitely transcend our present hopes and expectations, and that the glorious appearance of the throne of God will rise infinitely beyond whatever we are able to conceive of it. We might here entertain ourselves with many other speculations on this subject, from those several hints which we find of it in the Holy Scriptures, as whether there

may not be different mansions and apartments of glory, to beings of different natures; whether, as they excel one another in perfection, they are not admitted nearer to the throne of the Almighty, and enjoy greater manifestations of His presence; whether there are not solemn times and occasions, when all the multitude of heaven celebrate the presence of their Maker in more extraordinary forms of praise and adoration; as Adam, though he had continued in a state of innocence, would, in the opinion of our divines, have kept holy the Sabbath-day, in a more particular manner than any other of the seven. These, and the like speculations, we may very innocently indulge, so long as we make use of them to inspire us with a desire of becoming inhabitants of this delightful place.—ADDISON, in No. 580 of *'The Spectator.'*

IV.

I AGAIN visited him at night. Finding him in a very good humour, I ventured to lead him to the subject of our situation in a future state, having much curiosity to know his notions on this point.

JOHNSON. 'Why, sir, the happiness of an unembodied spirit will consist in a consciousness of the favour of God, in the contemplation of truth, and in the possession of felicitating ideas.'

BOSWELL. 'But, sir, is there any harm in our form-

ing to ourselves conjectures as to the particulars of our happiness, though the Scripture has said but very little on the subject? "We know not what we shall be."

JOHNSON. 'Sir, there is no harm. What philosophy suggests to us on this topic is probable: what Scripture tells us is certain. Dr. Henry More has carried it as far as philosophy can. You may buy both his theological and philosophical works, in two volumes folio, for about eight shillings.'

BOSWELL. 'One of the most pleasing thoughts is, that we shall see our friends again.'

JOHNSON. 'Yes, sir; but you must consider, that when we are become purely rational, many of our friendships will be cut off. Many friendships are formed by a community of sensual pleasures: all these will be cut off. We form many friendships with bad men because they have agreeable qualities, and they can be useful to us; but, after death, they can no longer be of use to us. We form many friendships by mistake, imagining people to be different from what they really are. After death, we shall see every one in a true light. Then, sir, they talk of our meeting our relations; but then all relationship is dissolved; and we shall have no regard for one person more than another, but for their real value. However, we shall either have the satisfaction of meeting our friends, or be satisfied without meeting them.'

BOSWELL. 'Yet, sir, we see in Scripture, that

Dives still retained an anxious concern about his brethren.'

JOHNSON. 'Why, sir, we must either suppose that passage to be metaphorical, or hold, with many divines and all the Purgatorians, that departed souls do not all at once arrive at the utmost perfection of which they are capable.'

BOSWELL. 'I think, sir, that is a very rational supposition.'

JOHNSON. 'Why, yes, sir; but we do not know it is a true one. There is no harm in believing it: but you must not compel others to make it an article of faith; for it is not revealed.' . . .

BOSWELL. 'As to our employment in a future state, the sacred writings say little. The Revelation, however, of St. John gives us many ideas, and particularly mentions music.'

JOHNSON. 'Why, sir, ideas must be given you by means of something which you know: and as to music, there are some philosophers and divines who have maintained, that we shall not be spiritualized to such a degree, but that something of matter, very much refined, will remain. In that case music may make a part of our future felicity.'—*Boswell's 'Life of Johnson,' March 27th, 1772.*

V.

THIS is a merry world, that's certain ; and if we can but arrive at the perfection of *one thing*, which we heartily push at too, and which I must confess we bid fairer for than any age that ever went before us ; I say, if we can but arrive at this ONE THING, we shall be the merriest generation that ever lived ; and you shall hear what it is presently.

First, the sting of all the bright, fine, polite, pleasant things of life, is this ugly thing called Death. 'Oh, Madam,' said a lady of quality the other day, to another lady that admired the felicity of her way of living, her plenty, her equipage, attendance, furniture, jewels, and fine clothes,—'Oh, Madam,' said the lady, 'It is true, I live very agreeably, and if it was not for this dying it would be all very pretty ; but that cursed article takes away all the comfort of my life.'

Secondly, the being called to an account afterwards. This is another sting of all the bright, fine, polite, pleasant things of life. 'Who dare call me to account for anything ?' said a hardened creature that I know ; and yet, when a grave person that stood by, told him, that He who made him could call him to account, he turned pale, in spite of all his insolence.

Now, I understand that there is a new way found out, to take off all the chagrin of the mind from

these two things : And if this project,—for I hope I may be allowed to call it a project,—succeeds, I say, it will make us all merry fellows indeed. This new project is to scratch out all the ideas of futurity and . . . God, I say scratch them out of the book of the mind, and this, they say, is now very easy to be done. . . . This is that perfection of devilism, which, as I said above, if we can but attain, we shall be the merriest generation that ever lived. . . . Would any of us value what we did in this world, if nobody was to call us to account in the next? Certainly these men are in the right, if they are but sure of the thing, and that they can but find out this philosopher's stone; for let them depend upon it, if there *is no God*, they need be afraid of no devil!—DANIEL DEFOE, in, 'Appelbee's Journal,' May 23rd, 1724, quoted by Mr. Lee in 'Daniel Defoe: His Life and recently Discovered Writings.'

VI.

BUT though religion is very kind to all men, it has promised peculiar rewards to the unhappy; the sick, the naked, the houseless, the heavy-laden, and the prisoner, have ever most frequent promises in our sacred law. The Author of our religion everywhere professes Himself the wretch's friend; and, unlike the false ones of the world, bestows all His caresses upon the forlorn. The unthinking have

censured this as partiality, as a preference without a merit to deserve it. But they never reflect, that it is not in the power even of Heaven itself to make the offer of unceasing felicity as great a gift to the happy as to the miserable. To the first, eternity is but a single blessing, since, at most, it but increases what they already possess. To the latter, it is a double advantage ; for it diminishes their pain here and rewards them with heavenly bliss hereafter.

But Providence is in another respect kinder to the poor than to the rich ; for as it thus makes the life after death more desirable, so it smooths the passage there. The wretched have had a long familiarity with every face of terror. The man of sorrow lays himself quietly down, with no possessions to regret, and but few ties to stop his departure ; he feels only nature's pang in the final separation, and this is no way greater than he has often fainted under before ; for, after a certain degree of pain, every new breach that death opens in the constitution, nature kindly covers with insensibility.

Thus Providence has given to the wretched two advantages over the happy in this life—greater felicity in dying, and in heaven all that superiority of pleasure which arises from contrasted enjoyment. And this superiority, my friends, is no small advantage, and seems to be one of the pleasures of the poor man in the parable ; for though he was already in heaven, and felt all the raptures it could give, yet

it was mentioned as an addition to his happiness, that he had once been wretched, and now was comforted ; that he had known what it was to be miserable, and now felt what it was to be happy.

Thus, my friends, you see religion does what philosophy could never do : it shows the equal dealings of Heaven to the happy and the unhappy, and levels all human enjoyments to nearly the same standard. It gives to both rich and poor the same happiness hereafter, and equal hopes to aspire after it ; but if the rich have the advantage of enjoying pleasure here, the poor have the endless satisfaction of knowing what it was once to be miserable, when crowned with endless felicity hereafter ; and even though this should be called a small advantage, yet, being an eternal one, it must make up by duration what the temporal happiness of the great may have exceeded by intenseness. . . .

To us, then, my friends, the promises of happiness in heaven should be peculiarly dear, for if our reward be in this life alone, we are, indeed, of all men the most miserable. When I look round these gloomy walls, made to terrify, as well as to confine us ; this light, that only serves to show the horrors of the place ; those shackles, that tyranny has imposed or crime made necessary ; when I survey these emaciated looks, and hear these groans :—oh, my friends, what a glorious exchange would heaven be for these ! To fly through regions unconfined as air—to bask

in the sunshine of eternal bliss—to carol over endless hymns of praise—to have no master to threaten or insult us, but the form of Goodness Himself for ever in our eyes: when I think of these things, death becomes the messenger of very glad tidings; when I think of these things, his sharpest arrow becomes the staff of my support; when I think of these things, what is there in life worth having? when I think of these things, what is there that should not be spurned away? Kings in their palaces should groan for such advantages; but we, humbled as we are, should yearn for them. . . .

Then let us take comfort now, for we shall soon be at our journey's end; we shall soon lay down the heavy burden laid by Heaven upon us; and though death, the only friend of the wretched, for a little while mocks the weary traveller with the view, and, like the horizon, still flies before him, yet the time will certainly and shortly come when we shall cease from our toil; when the luxurious great ones of the world shall no more tread us to the earth; when we shall think with pleasure of our sufferings below; when we shall be surrounded with all our friends, or such as deserved our friendship; when our bliss shall be unutterable, and still, to crown all, unending.—OLIVER GOLDSMITH—*The Vicar's address to his companions in gaol, in 'The Vicar of Wakefield.'*

VII.

O BLESSED mansions of the heavenly city ! O bright and glorious day of eternal light and bliss ! A day that never declines, a sun that never sets, nor is obscured by any succeeding night ; but a state always cheerful, always fixed, and secured from change and sorrow, from danger and decay. How do I pant and thirst after that happy hour, when this blessed morning shall dawn and shed its beams, and with a wondrous lustre put an end to all the darkness and miseries of mortality ? It does indeed already shine in the hearts and hopes of those good men, whose conversation is even now in heaven ; but even theirs is but a distant prospect, and such as, while they sojourn here, presents things only in a glass. The citizens and inhabitants of those blessed regions see it with their naked eye, they feel and enjoy its sweetness, and are all enlightened with its rays ; while the distressed sons of Eve endure and groan under their exile, and cannot but lament the bitterness of this imperfect gloomy day, which men on earth call evil. A day but short, and, what is worse, dismal and uncomfortable. For who can worthily express the pains, the perplexities of body and soul, which are the necessary, the inseparable incumbrances of man's present condition ? A condition wherein he is polluted with so many sins,

entangled in so many difficulties, beset with so many misfortunes, oppressed with so many fears, distracted with so many cares, disturbed and diverted from his main concern by so many impertinences, deluded with so many vanities, confounded with so many errors, wasted and worn out with so much labour and trouble ; assaulted by temptations, emasculated by pleasures, and tormented with great variety of necessities and wants ?

Oh, when will there be an end of this so complicated misery ? When may I hope to be enlarged and released from this bondage of sin ? When shall my thoughts and desires centre, and be for ever fixed, in Thee, my God, alone ? When may I hope to attain true joy in Thee, without any alloy of bodily suffering, without any distraction of mind ? When shall I rest in firm untroubled peace ; peace from accidents and temptations without, peace from guilt and misgiving, from the solicitations of lust and the violence of passion within ? When shall I see my Jesus face to face, and contemplate the beauties of His kingdom and glorious Godhead ? When will my dearest Saviour be my All in All, and receive me to those blissful habitations, prepared for them that love Him, before the foundation of the world ? . . .

This then is the rule, by which I try and sound the bent of my heart. If I love heaven, the thoughts of it will be frequent and pleasant to me. But if I love the world, the effects of this will be, that I shall

feel excess of joy in prosperous events, and be as immoderate in my grief for those that are otherwise. If I love the flesh, wanton and carnal imaginations will often return upon me, and be entertained with satisfaction ; but if I love the spirit, then shall I find in spiritual objects a grateful relish, and dwell upon them with true delight. For this my own senses and experience assure me, that what I love most I am best pleased to be entertained with, greediest to hear, and forwardest to talk of, most careful to remember, and to preserve deep and lasting impressions of upon my mind. And therefore, though I cannot attain to it so fully as I wish and strive, yet I can plainly perceive, and do truly value and admire the happiness of them, who can abandon all, and stick to Thee alone ; that commit a holy violence upon their natural inclinations, crucify the flesh, and, with a pure bright zeal, and a clear conscience, can offer holy, fervent prayers, a spiritual and unblemished sacrifice : where all without are forbidden entrance, and all within is composed, these men, so firmly intent upon Thee and their devotions, are fit to praise Thee and those angels, whose refined excellences they so happily aspire after, and to whose blessed society Thou wilt one day exalt and admit them.—
THOMAS À KEMPIS : *‘Of the Imitation of Jesus Christ.’ Second Edition of the English Translation, published in 1700.*

VIII.

THE day is coming and fixed in My unalterable decree, adorned with the triumph of joy and peace ; that mighty revolution, when these alternate successions of day and night shall cease, and everlasting uninterrupted light shall shine for ever ; there shall be lustre infinite, satisfactions unbroken, unconceivable, rest eternal, and above the power of any future danger. There shall be, then, no place left for that melancholy wish : ‘ O that Thou wouldst deliver me from the body of this death ;’ no occasion for that complaint, ‘ Woe is me that I am constrained to dwell with Mesech, and to have my habitation in this barren wilderness.’ For even the last enemy shall be subdued, and death itself destroyed. Salvation, then, and life shall reign for ever ; sorrow and anguish, sighs and tears shall flee away ; a crown of rejoicing put upon every head, and thou shalt be happy in the sweet society of saints and angels, the spirits of just men made perfect, and the assembly of the First-born.

Oh ! couldst thou now but see the heavens open, and with the ken of mortal eye behold the bright and everlasting crowns of my chosen, were thy heart large enough to admit a just idea of their trophies and glories, whom once the world despised, and thought not worthy to live upon the earth, thou then

wouldst gladly embrace their sufferings and reproaches, abandon all thy vain desires of worldly greatness, and disdain the perishing pleasures of the present life. Humility and patience would then appear in all their native beauties ; and even affliction and ignominy display such charms, as must attract thy love, and make thee esteem the reproaches of Christ, greater treasures and gain, than all the majesty and honour and most celebrated reputation that a mortal state is capable of.

Attend, then, seriously to these important truths, for they, if considered and believed in good earnest, will stop thy mouth, and effectually silence all thy complaints. For, sure, the sufferings of a moment cannot be thought too dear a price for eternal happiness in exchange. Surely the kingdom of God is no trifling concern ; and when the losing or attaining this lies before thee, nothing can be too much to prevent that loss ; nothing a hard bargain for that infinite advantage. Grovel then upon the earth no longer, but stand erect, and lift thy eyes and heart to heaven. See there the blessed effects, the mighty success, of all those sharp conflicts which My saints, while in the body, underwent ; the end of all their trials and adversities, their painful severities and pious labours. These mortified, afflicted men, once reputed the filth of the world, and the off-scouring of all things, the common mark of insolence and malice, are now in perfect joy ; their sorrows swallowed up in

transporting bliss and comfort, their dangers changed into secure peace ; their labours into ease and sweet repose ; their persecutions and wrongful accusations, before the bar of men, into thrones of glory, where they sit and judge the world, and live, and rejoice, and reign with Me for ever.—*Ibid.*

IX.

THE one conclusion of all research on this, as on every other subject, is inevitable. There is certainly some end worthy of man's creation and suited to his spirit, in his advancing struggle after knowledge and goodness, which the economy of earthly existence does not furnish. Man, in the highest development of his better nature, as a moral, religious, spiritual, intellectual creature, seeking association with holy and beautiful intelligences, is out of place in this world of incongruities. He must look upwards for his glory and his fellowship. He must anticipate satisfaction in the visions of his prophetic soul. The full purpose of his being is not here explained ; intelligent desire here finds no rest ; the sunshine of truth is only reflected on earth ; there is no perfect day to beam upon the eye of the mind ; light direct from its source falls not on the sight ; we must imagine the delights of which we are capable, but which we cannot here realize ; we must live ab-

stractedly if we would live reasonably in holy intimacy with Divine and human science ; we must look forward into futurity for the meaning of the past and for the fruition of our hopes. The present adds but a stone to the grand erection, the design of which is to occupy our contemplation everlastingly ; for each individual soul, in its memory and experience, is adding material to material, in an order and for an end at present unknown to itself, but yet manifestly according to the plan of a mind that cannot be disappointed, and which must end as it began in Eternal Love.—GEORGE MOORE, M.D., in ‘ *The Power of the Soul over the Body.*’

X.

DR. DODDRIDGE and Dr. Clark had been conversing one evening on the nature of the separate state, and the probability that the scenes on which the soul would enter upon its leaving the body, would bear some resemblance to those with which it had been conversant on earth ; that it might by degrees be prepared for the more sublime happiness of the heavenly world. This and other like conversation probably occasioned the following dream :—Dr. D—— imagined himself dangerously ill in London, and that, after some hours, his soul, quitting the body, took its flight in some kind of fine vehicle, which, though very different from the body he had just left, was still

material. He pursued his course through the air, expecting some celestial messenger to direct him, till he was at a distance from the city, when, turning to view it, he could not help exclaiming—How vain and trifling do the affairs in which the inhabitants of that place are so eagerly employed appear to me, a separate spirit.

While continuing his progress, without any certain direction, but happy in the thought of that universal goodness and providence of God, which extend alike to all states and worlds, he was met by one who told him that he was sent to conduct him to the place appointed for his abode; whence he concluded it could be no other than an angel, though appearing in the form of an elderly man. They went accordingly together, till they came within sight of a spacious building, which had the air of a palace. His guide told him it was a place assigned for his residence at present, on which the Doctor observed, that he remembered to have read while upon earth, that ‘eye had not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart conceived, what God had laid up for His servants,’ whereas he could easily have conceived *an idea* of such a building from others which he had seen, though he acknowledged they were greatly inferior.

The answer of his guide, plainly suggested by the conversation of the evening, was, that the scenes first presented to him were contrived to bear a near resemblance to those he had been accustomed to on

earth, that his mind might be more easily and gradually prepared for those glories that would open on him hereafter, and which would at first have quite dazzled and overpowered him. Being come to the palace, his guide led him through a kind of saloon to an inner apartment. The first thing that struck him was a large golden cup standing on a table, and having embossed on it the figure of a vine, with clusters of grapes. His guide informed him it was the cup in which our Saviour drank new wine with His disciples in His kingdom, and that the figures on it were meant to signify the union between Christ and His people; implying, that as the grapes derive all their beauty and flavour from the vine, so the saints, even in a state of glory, are indebted for their establishment in holiness and happiness to union with their Head, in whom they are all complete.

While they thus conversed he heard a signal, which the angel told him denoted his Lord's approach, and was designed to prepare him for the interview. Being then left awhile alone, he observed the room to be hung with pictures containing the history of his own life. The first represented him as an infant laid out as a corpse, in allusion to the fact of his having been at his birth laid aside as dead; and the last as dying on the bed in London, where he actually was at the time.

While deeply occupied in the reflections awakened by these pictures, he saw his Divine Master enter,

and, like John, 'fell at His feet as dead.' He was raised with the sublime and consolatory words—'Fear not ; I am the first and the last ;' after which, his Lord, with a look of inexpressible complacency, assured him of His favour, and kind acceptance of his faithful services. It then seemed to him that the Lord Jesus, after pressing the juice of grapes into the cup which was on the table, drank of it Himself, and next presented it to the astonished and grateful guest, saying—'In commemorating My death, you have often repeated what I said to My disciples, "I will no more drink with you of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I shall drink it new with you in the kingdom of My Father."—That day is now come.' He declined this at first, as being too great an honour : but our Lord replied, (as to Peter, in relation to washing his feet), 'If thou drink not with Me, thou hast no part with Me.' Upon this he drank of the cup, overwhelmed with gratitude, awe, and admiration. After a pause, the gracious Redeemer addressed him in words like these:—'This is not heaven : it is only such a faint and distant representation of the glory to be revealed as is suited to your mortal nature, and is designed to animate you to a more vigorous and determined zeal in My service on earth.'—*Abridged by JOHN SHEPPARD, and quoted in Notes and Illustrations to 'An Autumn Dream,' 3rd ed., 1867.*

XI.

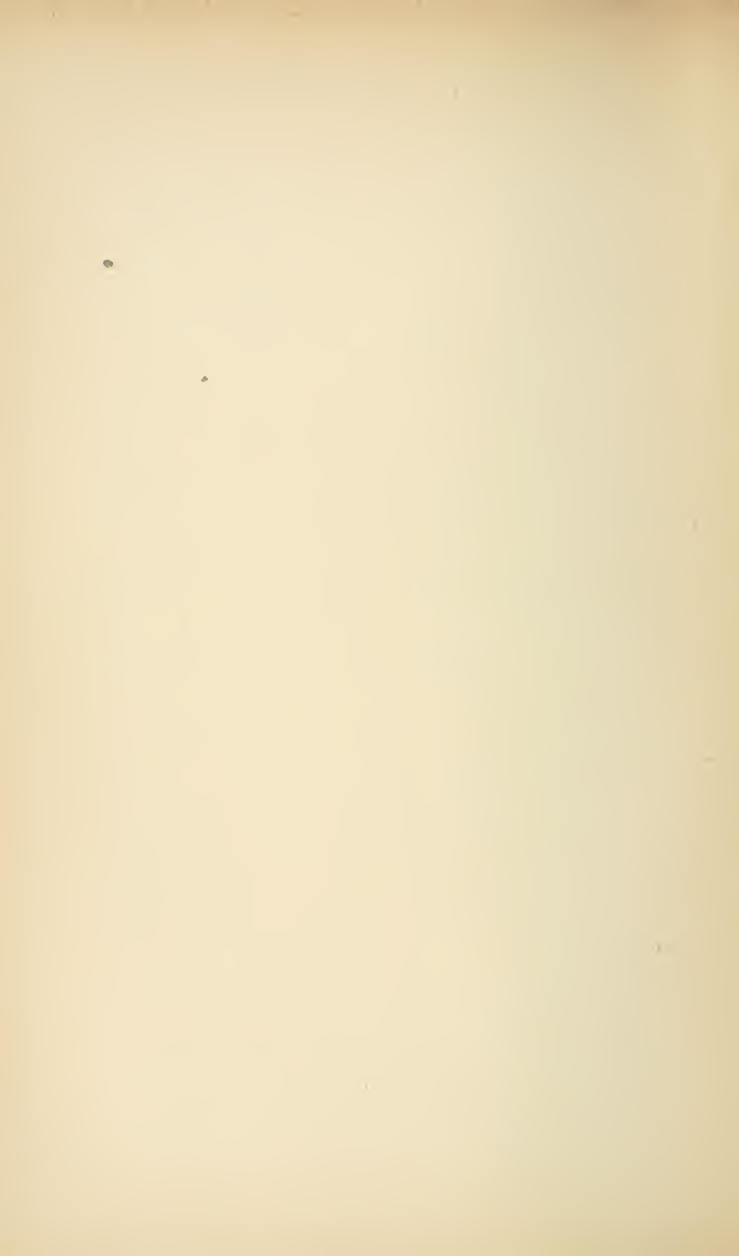
THE dream has a kind of interest superior to that view which it gives of an unseen state; since it is among those which have produced valuable effects upon the dreamer's mind. The view of an unseen state must have been accommodated to the conceptions of the party; and thus must be, in *every* such case, inadequate and even incorrect. But when the result,—the consolation of a pious and afflicted individual,—is considered, and this in connection with the distinctness and *repetition* of the dream, it would appear scarcely Christian not to infer some special design and ordination of Providence to console, by this hidden agency, one that had prayed for consolation. The little narrative is subjoined as nearly as possible, in the simple words of her who communicated it:—

‘I had a great deal of distress at the loss of two young children; one *six*, the other *two* years old. Besides my grief at the loss of each, I had a dread upon my mind that the elder child might not be so happy as the little one. This troubled me greatly; and for a long time (more than a year) I could not recover my spirits. Your grandmother and Mr. T—— used to call, or send for me, and try to comfort me; but I still had those sad thoughts and fears. One day in going to B—— I was much cast down, and

I prayed much to be relieved from this trouble. On that night I had a dream. I dreamt that I was in a place where I saw before me the finest flight of steps that I ever had seen, very broad and grand ; which I walked up ; and when I came to the top I met on the landing-place, which was dark and dismal, a good many people in gloomy dresses : among these I saw B—— T—— my aunt, who had been some time deceased. She pointed down another grand flight of steps, making signs that I should go. This I did, and when I reached the bottom, saw before me a beautiful wide green place, where were a great number of children hand-in-hand, dressed in white, and among these both my little ones, dressed just alike. Beyond them was a large stream of water ; and when I went to overtake them, the whole, with my children amongst them, vanished across the stream. I then woke ; but I had this dream a second time the same night ; and by means of it my trouble was taken away, and especially my fear about the elder child.'—*An Autumn Dream.*

THE REDEEMED IN THE GLORIFIED STATE.

ISAAC WATTS, D.D.



I.

THE spirits of the just made perfect have the nearest views of God their Father and their Saviour ; and as they see them face to face, so, may I venture to express it, they love them with a union of heart to heart ; for *he that is joined to the Lord* in the nearest union in heaven, may well be called *one spirit with Him*, since the apostle says the same thing of the saints on earth. . . . And though they may not be literally engaged in one everlasting act of worship, yet they are ever busy in some glorious services for Him. If they should be sent on any message to other worlds, yet they never wander from the sight of their God. . . . In that holy world dwells God Himself, who is original love ; there resides our Lord Jesus Christ, who is love incarnate ; and from that sacred head flows an eternal stream of love through every member, and blesseth all the inhabitants of that land with its divine refreshments. Holiness is perfect among the spirits of the just, because love is perfect there.—*The Happiness of Separate Spirits.*

II.

CONTEMPLATION indeed is a noble pleasure, and the joy of it rises high when it is fixed on the sublimest objects, and when the faculties are all exalted and refined. But surely such a sight of God and our dear Redeemer, as we shall enjoy above, will awaken and animate all the active and sprightly powers of the soul, and set all the springs of love and zeal at work in the most illustrious instances of unknown and glorious duty. . . . It would diminish the happiness of the saints in glory to be unemployed there. Those spirits who have tasted unknown delight and satisfaction in many long seasons of devotion, and in a thousand painful services for their blessed Lord on earth, can hardly bear the thoughts of paying no active duties, doing no work at all for Him in heaven, where business is all our delight, and labour is all enjoyment. Surely *His servants shall serve Him* there, as well as worship Him. . . . Heaven is represented as full of praises. There is the most glorious and perfect celebration of God the Father and the Saviour in the upper world; and the highest praise is offered to them with the deepest humility. The crowns of glory are cast down at their feet, and all the powers and perfections of God, with all His labours of creation, His cares of providence, and the sweeter mysteries of His grace, shall furnish noble matter for Divine praise. . . .

But is all heaven made up of praises? Is there no prayer there? . . . What is prayer, but the desire of a created spirit in an humble manner made known to its Creator? Does not every saint above desire to know God, to love and serve Him, to be employed for His honour, and to enjoy the eternal continuance of His love and its own felicity? . . . Does not every separate spirit there look and long for the resurrection, when it is certain that embodied spirits on earth who have *received the firstfruits of grace and glory, groan within themselves, waiting for the redemption of the body?* And may we not suppose each holy soul sending a sacred and fervent wish after this glorious day, and lifting up a desire to its God about it, though without the uneasiness of a sigh or a groan? . . . May not the Church above join with the Churches below in this language, *Father, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven?* Are not the souls of the martyrs that were slain represented to us as under the altar, crying with a loud voice, *How long, O Lord, holy and true?* . . .

Perhaps you will suppose there is no such service as hearing sermons, that there is no attendance upon the word of God there. But are we sure there are no such entertainments? Are there no lectures of Divine wisdom and grace given to the younger spirits there, by spirits of a more exalted station? Or may not our Lord Jesus Christ Himself be the everlasting Teacher of His Church? May He not, at solemn

seasons, summon all heaven to hear Him publish some new and surprising discoveries, which have never yet been made known to the ages of nature or of grace, and are reserved to entertain the attention, and exalt the pleasure of spirits advanced to glory? Must we learn all by the mere contemplation of Christ's person? Does He never make use of speech to the instruction and joy of saints above? . . . Is Jesus for ever silent? Does He converse with His glorified saints no more? And surely, if He speak; the saints will hear and attend.

. . . Oh, how gustful are the pleasures of celestial worship! What unknown varieties of performance, what sublime ministrations there are, and glorious services, none can tell. And in all this variety, which may be performed in sweet succession, there is no wandering thought, no cold affection, no divided heart, no listless or indifferent worshipper. . . .

Darkness and entanglement shall vanish at once from many of those knotty points of controversy, when they behold them in the light of heaven; and the rest of them shall be matter of delightful instruction for superior spirits to bestow upon those of lower rank, or on souls lately arrived at the regions of light.
—*Ibid.*

III.

IT is evident from the word of God, that *the spirits of the just*, with all the perfections that belong to a separate state, wait yet for greater perfection when their bodies shall be restored to them ; for as they suffered pain and agony in the body, they shall have a recompense of pleasure too. *God shall call*, and the dust of the saints *shall answer* ; God the Creator will *have a desire again to the work of His own hands*, and the happy souls will have a desire to be rejoined to their old companions.

O glorious hour ! O blessed meeting time ! A magnificent and Divine spectacle, worthy to attract the eyes of all the creation ! When the long-divided parts of human nature shall be united with unknown powers and glories ! When these bodies shall be called out of their long dark dungeon, all fashioned anew, and all new dressed in immortality and sun-beams ! When these spirits shall assume and animate their limbs again, exulting in new life and everlasting vigour ! . . .

If we would know what the society of heaven is, let us renew the memory of the wisest and holiest, the kindest and best companions that we were ever acquainted with here on earth ; let us recollect the most pleasing hours that we ever enjoyed in their society ; let us divest them of all their mistakes and

weaknesses, of all their sins and imperfections ; and then by faith and hope let us divest ourselves of all our own guilt and follies too ; let us fancy ourselves engaged with them in delightful discourse on the most Divine and most affecting subjects, and our hearts mutually raising each other near to God, and communicating mutual joys. This is the state of the blessed, this is the conversation of heaven, this and more than this shall be our entertainment when we arrive at those happy regions.—*Ibid.*

IV.

IT is a matter of wonder to us now on earth, that the blessed Son of God, who is one with the Father, should stoop so low as to unite Himself with a mortal nature, that He should become a poor despicable man, and pass through a life of sufferings and sorrows, and die an accursed death to redeem us from guilt and deserved misery. But when we shall see Him in His native glory and lustre, His acquired dignities, and all the honours of heaven heaped upon Him, it will raise our wonder high, to think that such a one should once *humble Himself to the death of the cross*, the death of the vilest slave, that He might save our souls from dying ; that He should pour out His own blood to wash off the stains of millions of sins, that we might appear righteous before a God of holiness.

Then shall the multitude of the saved join in that song, *To Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, be glory and dominion for ever.* . . .

Behold that noble army with palms in their hands ; once they were weak warriors, yet they overcame mighty enemies, and have gained the victory and the prize ; enemies rising from earth and from hell to tempt and accuse them, but *they overcame by the blood of the Lamb.* What a Divine honour shall it be to our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Captain of our salvation,* that weak Christians should subdue their strong corruptions, and get safe to heaven through a thousand oppositions within and without ! It is all owing to the grace of Christ, that grace which is all-sufficient for every saint. They are made *more than conquerors through Him that has loved them.* . . .

There is more work for our wonder and joy, and more glory for our blessed Lord, when we shall see that so many dark and dreadful providences were working together in mercy for the good of His saints. It is because Jesus Christ had the management of them all put into His hands ; and we shall acknowledge *He has done all things well.* . . . It is the voice of Christ to every saint in sorrow, *What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.* I saw not then, saith the Christian, that my Lord was curing my pride by such a threatening and abasing providence, that He was weaning my heart from

sensual delights by such a sharp and painful wound ; but now I behold things in another light, and give thanks and praises to my Divine Physician.

We shall look back upon the hours of our impatience and be ashamed, we shall chide the flesh for its old repinings, when we shall stand upon the eternal hills of paradise, and cast our eyes backward upon yonder transactions of time, those past ages of complaint and infirmity. We shall then with pleasure and thankfulness confess, that *the Captain of our Salvation* was much in the right to lead us through so many sufferings and sorrows, and we were much in the wrong to complain of His conduct. . . . They attribute all their victories to the wisdom, the goodness, and the power of their Divine Leader, and even stand amazed at their own success against such mighty adversaries. But they fought under the banner, conduct, and influence of the Prince of Life, the King of Righteousness, who is always victorious, and has a crown in His hand for every conqueror.

. . . As He now is, so are they, glorious in holiness, and Divinely beautiful, while each of them reflects the image of their blessed Lord, and they appear as wonders to all the beholding world. They were unknown here on earth, even as Christ Himself was unknown. This is the day appointed to reveal their works and their graces. Jesus is the *brightness of His Father's glory, and the express image of His person* ; and all the sons and daughters of God shall

then appear as so many pictures of the blessed Jesus, drawn by the finger of the Eternal Spirit.

And not their souls only, but their glorified bodies also, are framed in His likeness. What grace and grandeur dwell in each countenance. As thou art, O blessed Jesus, so shall they be, in that day, *all of them resembling the children of a king!* Vigour and health, beauty and immortality shine and reign throughout all that blessed assembly. The adopted sons and daughters of God resemble the original and only-begotten Son : Christ will have all His brethren and sisters conformed unto His glories, that they may be known to be His kindred, the children of His Father, and that He *may appear the first-born among many brethren.* . . . He shall be admired as the bright original, and each of the saints as a fair and glorious copy ; . . . each of them displaying the image of the original Son of God, and confessing all their virtues and graces, all their beauties and glories, both of soul and body, to be nothing else but mere copies and derivations from Jesus, the first and fairest image of the Father !—*Christ Admired and Glorified in His Saints.*

V.

O BLESSED state, where our faculties shall be so happily suited to our work, that we shall never feel ourselves weary of it, nor fatigued by it. And as

there is no weariness, so there is no sleeping there. Sleep was not made for the heavenly state. Can the spirits of the just ever sleep under the full blaze of Divine glory, under the incessant communications of Divine love, under the perpetual influences of the grace of God the Father, and of Jesus the Saviour, and amidst the inviting confluence of every spring of blessedness? . . .

In the heavenly state there is everlasting active service with everlasting delight and satisfaction. In that blessed world there can be no idleness, no inactivity, no trifling intervals to pass away time, no vacant or empty spaces in eternal life. Who can be idle under the immediate eye of God? Who can trifle in the presence of Christ? Who can neglect the pleasurable work of heaven under the sweetest influences of the present Deity, and under the smiles of His countenance, who approves all their work and worship? . . . When we leave this flesh and blood, farewell to all the tedious measures of time, farewell tiresome darkness; our whole remaining duration is life and light, vital activity and vigour, attended with everlasting holiness and joy. . . .

All the regions of paradise are for ever illuminated by the glory of God. The light of His countenance shines upon every step that we take, and brightens all our way. We shall walk in the light of God, and under the blessed beams of *the Sun* of Righteousness; and we are secured for ever against wandering, and

against every danger of tripping or falling in our course. *Our feet may stumble on the dark mountains here below* ; but there is no stumbling-block on the hills of Paradise, nor can we go astray from our God or our duty. The paths of that country are all pleasure, and ever-living daylight shines upon them without end. Happy beings, who dwell or travel there! . . .

The light of God shines round every creature in that country, and there is not a saint or angel there, that desires a covering from the sight of God, nor would accept of a veil or screen to interpose between him and the lovely glories of Divine holiness and grace. To behold God, and to live under the blessings of His eye, is their everlasting and chosen joy. . . .

Sleep, the image or emblem of death, is for ever banished from that world. All is vital activity there. Every power is immortal, and everything that dwells there is for ever alive. There can be no death, nor the image of it, where the everlasting God dwells, and shines with His kindest beams : His presence maintains perpetual vitality in every soul, and keeps the new creature in its youth and vigour for ever. . . . When our Lord Jesus Christ shall have given up His mediatorial kingdom to the Father, and have presented all His saints spotless and without blemish before His throne, it is hard for us mortals in the present state to say, how far He shall

be the everlasting medium of the communication of divine blessing to the happy inhabitants on high. Yet when we consider that the saints and angels and the whole happy creation are gathered together in Him as their head, it is certain they shall all be accounted in some sense His members; and it is highly probable He, as their head, shall be for ever active in communicating and diffusing the unknown blessings of that world, amongst all the inhabitants of it, who are gathered and united in Him.

The light of faith shows me the dawning of that glorious day, which shall finish all my nights and darkness for ever. Make haste, O delightful morning, and delay not my hopes. Let me hasten, let me arrive at that blessed inheritance, those mansions of Paradise, where night is never known, but one eternal day shall make our knowledge, our holiness, and our joy eternal.—*No Night in Heaven.*

E T E R N A L R E S T.

RICHARD BAXTER.

I.

IT is a delight to a soldier, or a traveller, to look back upon his adventures and escapes when they are over; and for a saint in heaven, to look back upon the state he was in on earth, and remember his sins, his sorrows, his fears, his tears, his enemies and dangers, his wants and calamities, must needs make his joys to be, rationally, more joyful. And, therefore, the blessed in their praising of the Lamb do mention His redeeming them out of every nation and kindred and tongue, and so out of their misery and wants and sins, which redemption doth relate to, and making them kings and priests to God. When they are at the end, they look back upon the way. When the fight is done, and the danger over, and their sorrows gone, yet their rejoicing in the remembrance of it is not done, nor the praises of their Redeemer yet over. But if we should have had nothing but content and rest on earth, what room would there have been for these rejoicings and praises hereafter?

II.

HOW many of the precious saints of God, of all ages and places, have gone before thee ! Thou art not to enter an untrodden path, nor appointed first to break the ice. Except only Enoch and Elias, which of the saints have escaped death ? And art thou better than they ? There are many millions of saints dead, more than do now remain on earth. What a number of thine own bosom friends and intimate acquaintance and companions in duty are now there ; and why should'st thou be so loth to follow ? Nay, hath not Jesus Christ Himself gone this way ? Hath He not sanctified the grave to us, and perfumed the dust with His own body ; and art thou loth to follow Him too ? Oh ! rather let us say as Thomas, ' Let us also go, and die with Him ; ' or rather, let us suffer with Him, that we may be glorified together with Him.

III.

SHOULD not our interest in heaven, and our relation to it, continually keep our hearts upon it. . . . Why, there our Father keeps His court. Do we not call Him ' Our Father which art in heaven ? ' Ah ! ungracious, unworthy children, that can be so taken up in their play below as to be mindless of such a Father. Also, there is Christ, our Head, our Husband,

our Life; and shall we not look towards Him, as oft as we can, till we come to see Him face to face? . . . There, also, is our mother. For Jerusalem, which is above, is the mother of us all. And there are multitudes of our elder brethren. There are our friends and our ancient acquaintance, whose society in the flesh we so much delighted in, and whose departure hence we so much lamented. And is this no attraction to thy thoughts? If they were within thy reach on earth, thou would'st go and visit them; and why wilt thou not oftener visit them in spirit, and rejoice beforehand to think of thy meeting them there again? . . . If you were but banished into a strange land, how frequent thoughts would you have of home. . . . You would even dream in the night that you were at home, that you saw your father, or mother, or friends. . . . And why is it not thus with us in respect of heaven? . . . We are here in continual distress and want, and there lies our substance. . . . We are here fain to be beholden to others, and there lies our own perpetual treasure.

IV.

TAKE thy heart once again, as it were, by the hand; bring it to the top of the highest mount; if it be possible, to some atlas above the clouds. Show it the kingdom of Christ, and the glory of it. Say to it,

All this will thy Lord bestow upon thee, who hast believed in Him, and been a worshipper of Him. It is the Father's good pleasure to give thee this kingdom. Seest thou this astonishing glory above thee? Why, all this is thy own inheritance; this crown is thine; these pleasures are thine; this company, this beauteous place is thine; all things are thine, because thou art Christ's and Christ is thine; when thou wast married to Him, thou hadst all this with Him. Enter the gates of the holy city, walk through the streets of the New Jerusalem, walk about Sion, go round about her, tell the towers thereof, mark well her bulwarks, consider her palaces, that thou mayst tell it to thy soul. Hath it not the glory of God, and is not her light like to a stone most precious? See the twelve foundations of her walls, and the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb therein. The building of the walls of it are of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as clear as glass. The foundation is garnished with precious stones, and the twelve gates are twelve pearls. Every several gate is of one pearl, and the street of the city is pure gold, as it were transparent glass; there is no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple of it. It hath no need of sun or moon to shine in it, for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. . . . What sayest thou now to all this? This is thy rest, O my soul, and this must be the place of thy everlasting habitation.

V.

LEAD on thy heart as from street to street, bringing it into the palace of the great King ; lead it, as it were, from chamber to chamber ; say to it, Here must I lodge, here must I live, here must I praise, here must I love, and be beloved ; I must shortly be one of this heavenly choir ; I shall then be better skilled in the music. Among this blessed company must I take my place. My voice must join to make up the melody. My tears will then be wiped away, my groans turned to another tune. . . . There it is that trouble and lamentation ceaseth, and the voice of sorrow is not heard. . . . Think of Christ as in our own nature glorified, think of our fellow-saints as men there perfected. . . . Oh, the delight that must needs then be in beholding the face of the living God, and in singing forth praises to Him and the Lamb, which must be our recreation when we come to our rest !

VI.

How delightful is the music of the heavenly hosts ! how pleasing will be those real beauties above, and how glorious the building not made with hands, and the house that God Himself doth dwell in, and the walks and prospects in the city of God, and the beauties and delights in the celestial paradise !

VII.

IF the face of human learning be so beautiful, that sensual pleasures are to it but base and brutish, how beautiful then is the face of God ! When we light on some choice and learned book, how are we taken with it ; we could read and study it day and night ; we can leave meat and drink and sleep to read it. What delights then are there at God's right hand, where we shall know in a moment all that is to be known !

VIII.

IF the delights of close and cordial friendship be so great, what delight we shall have in the friendship of the Most High, and in our mutual amity with Jesus Christ, and in the dearest love and comfort with the saints ! Surely this will be a closer and stricter friendship than ever was betwixt any friends on earth. And these will be more lovely, desirable friends than any that ever the sun beheld ; and both our affections to our Father and our Saviour, but especially His affection to us, will be such as here we never knew. . . . We shall then love a thousand times more strongly and sweetly than now we can ; and as all the attributes and works of God are incomprehensible, so is the attribute and work of love. ' He will love

us many thousand times more than we even at the perfectest are able to love Him. What joy, then, will there be in this mutual love !

IX.

YONDER sun must there be laid aside as useless, for it would not be seen for the brightness of God. I shall live above all yonder glory ; yonder is but darkness to the lustre of my Father's house. . . . Surely if the rain which rains, and the sun which shines, on the just and unjust be so wonderful ; the Sun, then, which must shine on none but saints and angels, must needs be wonderful and ravishing in glory. . . . Why we shall see when there shall be no sun to shine at all ; we shall behold for ever a Sun of more incomparable brightness. . . . But then to think of the Sion of God, of the vision of the Divine Majesty, of the comely order of the heavenly host ; what an admirable sight must that needs be !

X.

HOW sweet will the glory of His presence be ; and how high will His eternal love exalt me ; and how great shall I be made in communion with His greatness ! If my pilgrimage and warfare have such mercies, what shall I find in my home, and in my triumph ! If God will communicate so much to me

while I remain a sinner, what will He bestow when I am a perfect saint ! If I have had so much in this strange country, at such a distance from Him, what shall I have in heaven, in His immediate presence, where I shall ever stand about His throne !

XI.

IF some godly men that we read of have been overwhelmed with joy, till they have cried out, ‘Hold, Lord, stay Thy hand ; I can bear no more !’ like weak eyes that cannot endure too great a light ; oh, what will then be my joys in heaven, when as the object of my joy shall be the most glorious God, so my soul shall be made capable of seeing and enjoying Him. And though the light be ten thousand times greater than the sun’s, yet my eyes shall be able for ever to behold it.

XII.

O BLESSED rest, where we shall never rest day or night crying, ‘Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth :’ when we shall rest from sin, but not from worship ; from suffering and sorrow, but not from solace ! O blessed day, when I shall rest with God ; when I shall rest in the arms and bosom of my Lord ; when I shall rest in knowing, loving, rejoicing, and praising ; when my perfect soul and body together,

shall in these perfect actings perfectly enjoy the most perfect God ; when God also, who is love itself, shall perfectly love me ; yea, and rest in His love to me, as I shall rest in my love to Him, and rejoice over me with joy and singing, as I shall rejoice in Him ! How near is that most blessed, joyful day ! It comes apace ; even He that comes will come, and will not tarry. . . . Methinks I see Him coming in the clouds, with the attendance of His angels, in majesty and in glory. . . . Oh, see how the Judge doth smile upon you ; there is love in His looks ; the titles of Redeemer, Husband, Head, are written in His amiable, shining face. Hark, doth He not call you ? He bids you stand here on His right hand ; fear not, for there He sets His sheep. O joyful sentence, pronounced by that blessed mouth : ‘ Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundations of the world.’ See how your Saviour takes you by the hand ; go along you must, the door is open, the kingdom is His, and therefore yours. There is your place before His throne ; the Father receiveth you as the spouse of His Son ; He bids you welcome to the crown of glory : never so unworthy, crowned you must be. This was the project of free redeeming grace, and this was the purpose of eternal love. O blessed grace ! O blessed love ! Oh ! the frame that my soul will then be in ! Oh, how love and joy will stir ! But I cannot express it ; I cannot conceive it.

XIII.

FAREWELL, sin and suffering, for ever ; farewell, my hard and rocky heart ; farewell, my proud and unbelieving heart . . . and now welcome, most holy, heavenly nature, which, as it must be employed in beholding the face of God, so is it full of God alone, and delighteth in nothing else but Him. Oh, who can question the love which he doth so sweetly taste, or doubt of that which with such joy he feeleth ! Farewell, repentance, confession, and supplication ; farewell, the most of hope and faith ; and welcome, love, and joy, and praise. . . . Whatever mixture is in the streams, there is nothing but pure joy in the fountain. Here shall I be encircled with eternity, and come forth no more ; here shall I live, and ever live, and praise my Lord, and ever, ever, ever praise Him. My face shall not wrinkle, nor my hair be grey ; but this mortal shall have put on immortality, and this corruptible, incorruption, and death shall be swallowed up in victory. O death ! where is now thy sting ? O grave ! where is thy victory ? The date of my lease will no more expire, nor shall I trouble myself with thoughts of death, nor lose my joys through fear of losing them. When millions of ages are past, my glory is but beginning ; and when millions more are past, it is no nearer ending. Every day is all noon-tide, and every month is May or harvest, and every

year is there a jubilee, and every age is full manhood ; and all this is one eternity. O blessed eternity ! the glory of my glory ! the perfection of my perfection !

XIV.

YONDER, far above yonder, is thy Father's glory ; yonder must thou dwell when thou leavest this earth.

. . . O my soul, when thou departest from this body, and when the power of thy Lord hath raised it again, and joined thee to it, yonder thou must live with God for ever. . . . Seest thou that sun which lighteth all this world ? Why it must be taken down as useless there, or the glory of heaven will darken it, and put it out ; even thyself shall be as bright as yonder shining sun. God will be the sun, and Christ the light, and in His light shalt thou have light.

XV.

SHALT thou love when thou comest there ? . . . Is not the place a meeting of lovers ? Is not the life a state of love ? Is it not the great marriage-day of the Lamb, when He will embrace and entertain His spouse with love ? Is not the employment there the work of love, where the souls with Christ do take their fill ? O, then, my soul, begin it here. Be sick of love now, that thou may'st be well with love there ; keep thyself now in the love of God, . . . and

thou shalt be kept in the fulness of love for ever, and nothing shall embitter or abate thy pleasure, for the Lord hath prepared a city of love, a place for the communicating of love to His chosen, and those that love His name shall dwell there.

XVI.

THE way is strange to me, but not to Christ. There was the eternal dwelling of His glorious Deity, and thither hath He also brought His assumed glorified flesh. . . . Thither shall my soul be speedily removed, and my body very shortly follow. It is not so far, but He that is everywhere can bring me thither; nor so difficult and unlikely, but omnipotency can effect it.

XVII.

IF the mathematics alone are so delectable, that their students do profess that they should think it sweet to live and die in those studies, how delectable, then, will my life be, when I shall fully and clearly know those things which the most learned do not know but doubtfully and darkly! In one hour shall I see all difficulties vanish, and all my doubts . . . shall be resolved: so happy are the students of that university. . . . For in knowing God, I shall know all things that are fit or good for the creature to know.

XVIII.

WHAT a blessed day will that be when I shall have all mercy, perfection of mercy, nothing but mercy, and fully enjoy the Lord of mercy Himself! when I shall stand on the shore, and look back upon the raging seas which I have safely passed! when I shall, in safe and full possession of glory, look back upon all my pains and troubles, and fears and tears, and upon all the mercies which I here received; and then shall behold the glory enjoyed there, which was the end of all this! Oh, what a blessed view will that be! O glorious prospect which I shall have on the celestial Mount Zion!

XIX.

IF the very word of God were sweeter to Job than his necessary food, and to Jeremy was the very joy and rejoicing of his heart, and to David was sweeter than the honey and honeycomb . . . oh, then, how blessed a day will that be, when we shall fully enjoy the Lord of this word, and shall need these written precepts and promises no more; but shall, instead of these love-letters, enjoy our Beloved, and instead of these promises, have the happiness in possession, and read no book but the face of the glorious God!

XX.

WHAT a happy life should I here live, could I but love as much as I would, and as oft, and as long as I would ! Could I be all love, and always loving, O my soul, what wouldst thou give for such a life ! . . . What a blessed state wilt thou shortly be in, when thou shalt have far more of these than thou canst now desire ! and shalt exercise all thy perfect graces upon God in presence and open sight, and not in the dark, and at a distance, as now !

XXI.

OH, when shall I arrive at that safe and quiet harbour where is none of these storms, and waves, and dangers ; when I shall nevermore have a weary, restless night or day ? Then shall not my life be such a medley or mixture of hope and fear, of joy and sorrow, as now it is ; nor shall flesh and spirit be combating within me, nor my soul be still as a pitched field, or a stage of contention, where faith and unbelief, affiance and distrust, humility and pride, do maintain a continual distracting conflict. Then shall I not live a dying life for fear of dying, nor my life be made uncomfortable with the fears of losing it. Oh, when shall I be past these soul-tormenting fears, and cares, and griefs, and passions ? . . . There is none of this disorder in the heavenly Jerusalem ; there shall I find

a government without imperfection, and obedience without the least unwillingness or rebellion ; even an harmonious consent of perfected spirits, in obeying and praising their everlasting King. Oh, how much better is it to be a door-keeper there, and the least in that kingdom, than to be the conqueror or commander of this tumultuous world ! There will our Lord govern all immediately by Himself, and not put the reins in the hands of such ignorant riders, nor govern by such foolish and sinful deputies, as the best of the sons of men now are.

XXII.

LORD, my soul itself is in a strait, and what to choose I know not well, but yet Thou knowest what to give ; to depart and be with Thee is best ; but yet to be in the flesh seems needful. Thou knowest I am not weary of Thy work, but of sorrow and sin I must needs be weary. I am willing to stay while Thou wilt here employ me, and to despatch the work which Thou hast put into my hands, till these strange thoughts of Thee be somewhat more familiar, and Thou hast raised me into some degree of acquaintance with Thyself ; but I beseech Thee, stay no longer when this is done. . . . I dare not be so impatient of living, as to importune Thee to cut off my time, and urge Thee to snatch me hence unready, because I know that my everlasting state doth so

much depend on the improvement of this life. Nor yet would I stay when my work is done ; and remain here sinning, when my brethren are triumphing. . . . They are ever living, and I am daily dying : their joys are raised by the knowledge of their endlessness ; my griefs are enlarged by still expecting more : while they possess but one continued pleasure, I bear the successive assaults of fresh calamities. One billow falls in the neck of another ; and when I am rising up from under one, another comes and strikes me down. Yet I am Thy child, as well as they ; Christ is my Head, as well as theirs : why is there then so great a distance ? How differently dost Thou use us, when Thou art Father to us all. . . . But I acknowledge the equity of Thy ways. Though we are all children, yet I am the prodigal, and therefore meeter in this remote country to feed on husks ; while they are always with Thee, and possess Thy glory. . . . They were once themselves in my condition, and I shall shortly be in theirs ; they were of the lowest form before they came to the highest ; they suffered before they reigned ; they came out of great tribulation, who now are standing before Thy throne ; and shall not I be content to come to the crown as they did, and to drink of their cup before I sit with them in the kingdom ? . . . The world they are now in, was as strange to them before they were there as it is to me. . . . I am contented, therefore, O my Lord, to stay Thy time, and go Thy

way ; so Thou wilt exalt me also in Thy season, and take me into Thy barn when Thou seest me ripe. In the meantime I may desire, though I am not to repine ; I may look over the hedge, though I may not break over ; I may believe and wish, though not make any sinful haste ; I am content to wait, but not to loose Thee.

XXIII.

I AM known of God, when my knowledge of Him is dark and small ; and He knoweth whither it is that He will take me, and what my state and work shall be. He that is preparing a place for me with Himself, is well acquainted with it and me. . . . He that is now the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as being living with Him while they are dead to us, will receive my departing soul to them, and to Himself, to be with Christ, which He hath instructed me to commend into His hands, and to desire Him to receive. He that is now making us living stones for the New Jerusalem and His heavenly temple, doth know where every one of us shall be placed. And His knowledge must now be my satisfaction and my peace.

XXIV.

IF there be any true beauty on earth, where should it be so likely as in the spouse of Christ ? It is her

that He adorneth with His jewels, and feasteth at His table ; and keepeth for her always an open house and heart ; He revealeth to her His secrets, and maintaineth constant converse with her : He is her constant guardian, and in every deluge encloseth her in His ark : He saith to her, Thou art all beautiful, my beloved ! And is His spouse, while black, so comely ? Is the afflicted, sinning, weeping, lamenting, persecuted Church so excellent ? Oh, what then will be the Church, when it is fully gathered and glorified ; when it is ascended from the valley of tears to Mount Sion ? . . . The glory of the Old Jerusalem will be darkness and deformity in comparison with the glory of the New. . . . Let heaven have some share in your Sabbaths, where you must shortly keep your everlasting Sabbath. As you go from stair to stair, till you come to the top, so use your Sabbaths as steps to glory, till you have passed them all, and are there arrived.

HEAVEN AND ITS ASSOCIATIONS.

WILLIAM JAY.

I.

AS for those who have buried early hopes : . . . Comfort one another with the assurance that their death is their everlasting gain. . . . They are infinitely happier than it is possible for you to conceive, and their blessedness is secured beyond the power of injury. Remember they are not separated from you for ever,—you are going to them. They are waiting to receive you into everlasting habitations. On your arrival there, you will know them, and they will know you ; even they will know you there, who never knew you here. And may you not indulge the expectation, not only that you will know them, but be serviceable to them—be employed in forming and in teaching them ? Oh ! the pleasing work of a mother, to rear a child in that better country, free from sin, perverseness, pain ; without anxiety and without fear ! Nor imagine that in the meantime they are disregarded or overlooked, because of their tender age or their inferiority of any other kind. Selfishness and pride only reign *here*. *That* world is a world of condescension, of kindness, of love. *There* are pious

friends. *There* are angels who attended them here. *There* is your Father and their Father, your God and their God.

II.

IT is not good for man to be alone. He is formed for social enjoyment ; and it is a great source of his present pleasure. The representation of heaven meets this propensity. We are assured that it is a state of society. And there are two classes of beings that will contribute much to our satisfaction and improvement. The one is endearing.—It takes in those you loved in life, with whom you took sweet counsel together, and went to the house of God in company your pious friends and relations, who now sleep in Jesus. With what reluctance you yielded them up!—Sorrowing most of all that you should see their face and hear their voice no more! . . . But wipe away your tears. They are not lost. Their separation from you is but temporary. You shall see and hear them again. You shall know them ; and shall together review all the way by which the Lord has led you in the wilderness. The other is dignifying.—It comprehends patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs—*angels*. You shall be introduced to company of the very first sort. Angels are the flower of the creation ; and the poorest, meanest believer shall enjoy it ; and be prepared for it. There are many now whose excellences you venerate, but their pre-

eminence confounds and embarrasses you. You long to be in their presence, but shrink from the interview. You could wish to be with them without being seen or heard : such a sense have you of their wisdom and your weakness ; their goodness and your unworthiness. But nothing of this perplexity, which now often robs us of half our social enjoyments, shall hereafter be known. Whatever sense we have of our inferiority, it will not be disagreeable ; we shall feel no fear, no reluctance. These glorious beings are all generosity, tenderness, and love. They will receive us with joy. We shall find ourselves perfectly free and happy. With what pleasure will they communicate their knowledge ! And with what ecstasy will you receive it ! How instructive, how sublime will our intercourse be ! How delightful to find ourselves translated from this bedlam-world, this Mesech,

From these low grounds where sorrows grow,
And every pleasure dies—

to that better, that heavenly country : and to exchange the society of men, vain men, vexing men, sinful men, for an innumerable company of angels.

III.

THIS body is not to be annihilated, though reduced—it will be only *changed*. . . . It shall be fashioned like unto His glorious body. The comparison does not regard His body in the days of His flesh. It was

then possessed of all our sinless qualities and feelings. But, after His resurrection and ascension, it was deprived of everything animal and humiliating. It was incapable of hunger or weariness. It could move with the ease of thought, and was invulnerable and eternal as the soul. It was glorified. A glimpse of this glory was given by way of anticipation to the disciples, in the Transfiguration, when His face shone as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light. . . . How glorious must that body be in which He now governs the world ! In which He will judge the universe ! In which we shall hold all our intercourse with Deity for ever ! Yet a conformity to this glory is not a privilege too great for our hope. As sure as we now resemble the Saviour in disposition, we shall be like Him in person : and the same mind will be followed with the same body.

IV.

‘IT doth not yet appear what we shall be ; but this we know, that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.’ . . . ‘And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes ; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain : for the former things are passed away.’ Such are the imperfections we now feel. Imagine all these annihilated. Then, that which is perfect is come, and that

which is in part, in knowledge, holiness, and bliss, shall be done away. We shall be presented faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. Such is the imagery the Scripture employs; and as our souls are now incarnate, and we acquire knowledge by sensation and reflection, our future condition will more powerfully impress us when it is held forth by things seen and temporal. Hence it is expressed by rivers of pleasure; trees of life; crowns of glory; a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens; a city of habitation. . . . It is not a village, or a town, but a *city* of habitation. A city is the highest representation of civil community. There have been famous cities; but what are they to all this? Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God! It is the city of the living God. It is the city of the great King. It is the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. The foundation is of precious stones. The pavement is of pure gold. The gates are of pearls. 'I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it; and the Lamb is the light thereof.' But who can estimate the honours, the provisions, the pleasures of the place. . . . Not a city of *visitation*. Christians shall not only enter, but abide. They shall go no more out. . . . The Christian is now a traveller; then he will be a resi-

dent: he is now on the road; he will then be at home: 'there remaineth a *rest* for the people of God.' . . . It is not a solitary condition; we shall partake of it with an innumerable company of angels, with all the saved from among men, with patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, our kindred in Christ. 'These are fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God.'

V.

THE difference between grace and glory is not so great as some may imagine. They differ only in degree. The state is the same; the nature is the same. Grace is glory in the bud, and glory is grace in the flower. The one is the child, and the other the man; the one the dawn, the other the day. For what is heaven? Is it a condition in which all worldly distinctions will be done away, and only those remain which resulted from character? The Christian is rising towards it now. In his eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord. Is it a condition in which all the differences which now divide the religious world will be abolished; in which no inquiry will be made *where* we worshipped, but only *how*? He is tending to it now; 'Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.' . . . Does it consist in perpetual blessing and praise? He is entering it now; 'I will bless the Lord at all times, His praise

shall continually be in my mouth.' Are the glorified happy in being ever with the Lord? He now cries, 'O that I knew where I might find Him!' 'As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?' A Christian, therefore, has something of heaven now: he has it in its source, in its elements, in its earnest, in its foretastes. . . . And yet all we possess, all we enjoy, all we experience, all we know here, is not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. If a transient visit be so delightful, what will the constant vision be! If it be so satisfactory to behold through a glass darkly, what will it be when we shall see face to face! Ah! says the Christian, grateful, yet still aspiring, 'In Thy presence there is fulness of joy, and at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore. I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness.'

VI.

WE may venture to affirm, that if heaven was now fully laid open to our view, it would be so impressive and engrossing, as to render everything here insignificant and uninteresting, and loosen and detach us from all our present engagements. St. Pierre tells us of his returning to France, in a ship that had been absent several years in the East Indies. And 'when,'

says he, 'the crew approached their native country, they were all eagerness to discern it. Some of them mounted the rigging : some of them employed their glasses. By-and-by an exclamation was heard, "Yonder it is !" Then they became thoughtful and listless. But when they drew nearer, and began to discover the tops of the hills and the towers, that reminded them of the spots in which they had been brought up, they knew not how to contain themselves. They dressed themselves in their best apparel ; they brought out the presents designed for their connexions. But when the vessel entered the harbour, and they saw their friends and relations on the quay, stretching forth their hands to embrace them, —many of them leaped from the ship, and other hands were employed to bring it to its moorings.' Ah ! Christian, could you see the better country from which you were born, and to which you are bound — could you behold your connexions there, ready to receive you ; your station would soon be deserted, and other agents would be wanted to carry on their concerns. . . . The full disclosure of heaven would not only derange the present order of things, but endanger, injure, and destroy the very beings to whom it was presented. . . . No ; we have not eyes to see that brilliancy now ; we have not ears to endure that melody now ; we have not frames to bear up under that weight of glory now. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.

VII.

IT has been asked, Are there degrees in glory? We are persuaded there are. All analogy countenances the conclusion. We see diversities and unequalities pervading all the works of God. We know there are gradation among angels; for we read of thrones and dominions, principalities and powers. And though all Christians are redeemed by the same blood, and justified by the same righteousness, we know that there are degrees in grace. We know the good ground brought forth in some places thirty, in some sixty, in some a hundred fold. And the apostle tells us, Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour. But here we approve of the old illustration—however unequal in size these vessels may be, when plunged into this ocean, they shall all be equally filled.

VIII.

IT has been asked, Shall we know each other in heaven? Suppose you should not; you may be assured of this, that nothing will be wanting to your happiness. But oh! you say, how would the thought affect me now! *There* is the babe that was torn from my bosom; how lovely then, but a cherub now! There is the friend, who was as mine own soul, with whom I took sweet counsel, and went to the house of

God in company. There is the minister—whose preaching turned my feet into the path of peace—whose words were to me a well of life. There is the beloved mother, on whose knees I first laid my little hands to pray, and whose lips first taught my tongue to pronounce the name of Jesus! And are these removed from us for ever? Shall we recognise them no more?—Cease your anxieties. Can memory be annihilated? Did not Peter, James, and John know Moses and Elias? Does not the Saviour inform us that the friends, benefactors have made of the mammon of unrighteousness, shall receive them into everlasting habitations? Does not Paul tell the Thessalonians, that they are his hope, and joy, and crown, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ?

IX.

SOME would ask, Where is heaven? The universe is immense; but what particular part of it is assigned for the abode of the blessed, we cannot determine. It will probably be our present system renovated. May we not infer this from the words of the Apostle Peter—‘Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat—nevertheless, we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness?’ But is it a *place*? Our Lord has a body

like our own ; and this cannot be omnipresent ; and wherever He is corporeally, there is heaven—*Where I am, there* shall also My servants be. Enoch and Elias have bodies ; all the saints will have bodies ; and these cannot be everywhere. We read of the hope laid up for us in heaven. Of entering into the holy place. And, ‘I go,’ says Jesus to His disciples, ‘to prepare a place for you.’ But though it is really a place, we must chiefly consider it as a state. Even now, happiness does not essentially depend on what is without us. What was Eden to Adam and Eve, after sin had filled them with shame, and sorrow, and fear ? But Paul in prison was infinitely happier than Cæsar on the throne of the nations.

X.

YOU may reckon upon *perfect purity*. This announcement has little attraction for those of you who never saw the beauty of holiness, and never abhorred yourselves, repenting in dust and ashes. But, oh ! to a Christian it is worth dying for, to leave behind him the body of this death ; this law in the members warring against the law of his mind ; this inability to do the things that he would ; this presence of evil ever with him ; this liableness, this proneness to sin, even in his holy things—tarnishing every duty, wounding his own peace, and vexing and grieving the Spirit of his best Friend. To be freed from the

enemy, and to have nothing in me that temptation can operate upon ! To be incapable of ingratitude, and unbelief, and distractions in duty ! To be innocent as the first Adam, and holy as the second ! What wonder, the Christian exclaims, with Henry, ' If *this* be heaven, oh that I was there ! '

XI.

YOU may reckon upon—The most *delightful associations*. We are formed for society. Much of our present happiness results from attachment and intercourse. Who knows not 'the comforts of love?' Yea, and who knows not its sorrows also? We must weep when the objects of our affection weep. The arrows that pierce our friends wound us also. We tolerate, we excuse their imperfections ; but we feel them. And the thought of absence—separation—death, is dreariness, pain, and anguish. Hence, some have been ready to envy the unrelated, unconnected individual, whose anxieties and griefs are all personal. But it is not good for man to be alone in any condition. It is better to follow the course of Providence ; to cherish the intimacies of life ; to improve and to sanctify them ; and under the disadvantages which now mingle with them, to look forward to a state where the honey will be without the sting, and the rose without the thorn ; and attachment and intercourse without the deductions arising from pain, and

infirmities, and pity, and fear. . . . You will there have the most *endeared* society; for it will include those to whom you were so tenderly related by nature, or pious friendship, and at parting with whom you sorrowed most of all, that you should see their face and hear their voice no more; and also those you left behind you with reluctance and anxiety in a world of sin and trouble. With these your fellowship, after a brief separation, will be renewed, improved and perfected for ever. The society will also be the most *dignified*; and without its present embarrassments. There are now personages so superior, that you seem reduced to nothing at the thought of them. You esteem and admire them; and wish to hear, and see, and mingle with them; yet you shrink from the presence of such genius, wisdom, and goodness. But you will feel nothing of this, when you sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and Moses, and with prophets, and apostles, and martyrs, and reformers, in the kingdom of God. Nor will *saints* only be your companions: but those glorious beings who never sinned; who excel in strength; who are proverbial for their wisdom; who are your models in doing the will of God on earth; who are your ministering spirits, invisibly watching over you in your minority—the innumerable company of *angels*. And though they will not be able to say, He hath redeemed *us* unto God by His blood, they will cry with a loud voice—though you will endeavour to be louder—

‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.’

XII.

BUT what are the employments of heaven? Dr. Watts has speculated much on this subject. Some of his conjectures are probable, and all pleasing. But we dare not follow him. Of this we are sure, that there will be none of those mean and degrading toils which arise now from the necessities of our nature, or from luxury and pride. Neither will there be any of those religious exercises which pertain to a state of imperfection. Repentance will be hid from our eyes. There will be no more warfare and watchings. Neither will there be any more prayers with strong cryings and tears. Yet it is said, ‘They serve Him day and night in His temple.’ And their powers will be equal to the work; for neither the fervency nor the duration of the service will produce exhaustion or languor.

XIII.

ON the presence and sight of the Saviour, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, you may reckon; and you *will* reckon—and reckon *supremely*—if you are a Christian. ‘Ah!’ says Paul, ‘I long to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far

better.' 'We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord.' What would everything be in His absence! Could the place, the company, the harps, be a substitute for Him? But here is the consummation—you shall serve Him, and see His face. You need not envy those who knew Him after the flesh; *you* will have access to Him; you will see the King, and see Him in His beauty. He is now with *you*. He knows your soul in adversity; and comes to you as a friend, and helper, and comforter. But you are now in prison. His visits, when He looks upon you through the bars, and brings you supplies, and communes with you in the cell, are relieving.' They solace the confinement; you wish them multiplied; you expect them with joy. But the best of all these visits will be the last, when He will come not only *to* you, but *for* you: when He will open the doors of the dungeon, and knock off the fetters, and take you home to His palace. Then you will be *with Him*: you will walk with Him in white; you will eat and drink at His table in His kingdom; you will be for ever with the Lord.

XIV.

THE most *exquisite enjoyment*. This will spring abundantly from all the foregoing sources, and especially the last. It will far transcend every feeling we

have had of delight and ecstasy here. The state itself is expressed by it. 'Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.' Jude says we shall be 'presented before the presence of His glory, with exceeding joy.' And says David, 'In Thy presence is fulness of joy, and at Thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.' For you may reckon upon the *perpetuity* of all this. 'Permanency,' says the poet, 'adds bliss to bliss.'—But here it is absolutely indispensable even to the happiness itself: for the greater the blessedness, the more miserable we should feel if it were in danger. Who, in the possession of such a prize, could exist under the thought of losing it? How careful therefore are the sacred writers never to leave out this *essential* attribute in any of their descriptions! If it be life, it is 'eternal' life. If it be salvation, it is 'everlasting' salvation. If it be a kingdom, it is a kingdom that 'cannot be shaken.' If it be a crown, it is a crown of 'glory that fadeth not away.'

XV.

YOU may reckon not only on the eternity, but the *increase*. Who could think of being doomed to remain stationary? How irksome would any condition be in which there could be no possibility of advance and improvement! But your faculties will not be confined to a circle of sameness, they will be free: they will break forth on every side. How much more

do the angels know now than once ; and yet still they desire to look into the Saviour's sufferings and glory ! How often will there be new songs in heaven, or fresh exclamations of admiration and praise, from fresh discoveries and displays of the perfections of God, in His works and ways ! Every finite being is capable of accession ; and in knowing, and doing, and attaining, and enjoying, there will be an infinite progression before us.

XVI.

BEHOLD the Christian in his final destiny. . . . Behold him *there* as a *monument* of *Divine* grace. What was he *once* ? He will not be unwilling to look to the rock whence he was hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence he was digged. He will acknowledge that by nature he was a child of wrath even as others ; condemned by the law of God ; a fallen, guilty, depraved creature ; his powers all defiled and desolate ; helpless and ready to perish. But what is he *now* ? Redeemed ; justified ; renewed ; quickened together with Christ ; raised up and made to sit with Him in the heavenly places. And *whence* is all this ? Is it by his own worthiness, or righteousness, or strength, that he has made himself whole ? 'This people,' says God, 'have *I* formed for Myself ; they shall show forth My praise.' Here He has placed them to display in their salvation the freeness, the power, and the fulness of His grace—that in the

ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards them by Christ Jesus. And falling in completely with this design, they cast their crowns at His feet, and exclaim, 'Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy and Thy truth's sake. By the grace of God I am what I am. Not I, but the grace of God which was with me.'

. XVII.

BEHOLD the GLORIFIED Christian, and see the *justification of his choice*. Here, his fellow-creatures despised him, or affected to pity. . . . Even *then* wisdom was justified of all her children. . . . Even then they were not ashamed of their self-denial or sufferings, for they knew whom they had believed ; and were persuaded that He was able to keep that which they had committed unto Him against that day. Even *then* they rejoiced in the testimony of their consciences, and the secret smiles and whispers of their Lord and Saviour. But the world knew them not. They were princes in disguise. Their titles were refused, and their honours and riches were turned to scorn. And they bore this with firmness and patience, for they saw that their day was coming. And lo ! now it is arrived. Now they shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Now is the manifestation of the sons of God.

NATURE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD. •

THOMAS CHALMERS, D.D.

I.

THE common imagination that we have of Paradise on the other side of death, is, that of a lofty aërial region, where the inmates float in ether, or are mysteriously suspended upon nothing—where all the warm and sensible accompaniments which give such an expression of strength, and life, and colouring to our present habitation, are attenuated into a sort of spiritual element, that is meagre, and imperceptible, and utterly uninviting to the eye of mortals here below—where every vestige of materialism is done away, and nothing left but certain unearthly scenes that have no power of allurements, and certain unearthly ecstasies, with which it is felt impossible to sympathise. The holders of this imagination forget all the while, that really there is no essential connexion between materialism and sin—that the world which we now inhabit, had all the amplitude and solidity of its present materialism before sin entered into it—that God so far, on that account, from looking slightly upon it, after it had received the last touch of His creating hand, reviewed the earth, and the waters, and the firmament, and all

the green herbage, with the living creatures, and the man whom He had raised in dominion over them, and He saw everything that He had made, and behold it was all very good. They forget that on the birth of materialism, when it stood out in the freshness of those glories which the great Architect of nature had impressed upon it, that then 'the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy.' . . . No, my brethren, the object of the administration we sit under, is to extirpate sin, but it is not to sweep away materialism. By the convulsions of the last day, it may be shaken and broken down from its present arrangements; and thrown into such fitful agitations, as that the whole of its existing framework shall fall to pieces; and with a heat so fervent as to melt its most solid elements, may it be utterly dissolved. And thus may the earth again become without form and void, but without one particle of its substance going into annihilation. Out of the ruins of this second chaos, may another heaven and another earth be made to arise; and a new materialism, with other aspects of magnificence and beauty, emerge from the wreck of this mighty transformation; and the world be peopled as before, with the varieties of material loveliness, and space be again lighted up into a firmament of material splendour.

Were our place of everlasting blessedness so purely spiritual as it is commonly imagined, then the soul of man, after, at death, having quitted his body, would

quit it conclusively. That mass of materialism with which it is associated upon earth, and which many regard as a load and an encumbrance, would have leave to putrefy in the grave, without being revisited by supernatural power, or raised again out of the inanimate dust into which it had resolved. If the body be indeed a clog and a confinement to the spirit, instead of its commodious tenement, then would the spirit feel lightened by the departure it had made, and expatiate in all the buoyancy of its emancipated powers, over a scene of enlargement. And this is, doubtless, the prevailing imagination. But why then, after having made its escape from such a thralldom, should it ever recur to the prison-house of its old materialism, if a prison-house it really be? . . . In other words, what is the use of a day of resurrection, if the union which then takes place is to deaden or to reduce all those energies that are commonly ascribed to the living principle, in a state of separation? But, as a proof of some metaphysical delusion upon this subject, the product, perhaps, of a wrong though fashionable philosophy, it would appear, that to embody the spirit is not the stepping-stone to its degradation, but to its preferment. The last day will be a day of triumph to the righteous—because the day of the re-entrance of the spirit to its much-loved abode, where its faculties, so far from being shut up into captivity, will find their free and kindred development in such material organs as are suited to

them. The fact of the resurrection proves that, with man at least, the state of a disembodied spirit is a state of unnatural violence—and that the resurrection of his body is an essential step to the highest perfection of which he is susceptible. And it is indeed an homage to that materialism, which many are for expunging from the future state of the universe altogether—that ere the immaterial soul of man has reached the ultimate glory and blessedness which are designed for it, it must return and knock at that very grave where lie the mouldered remains of the body which it wore—and there inquisition must be made for the flesh, and the sinews, and the bones, which the power of corruption has perhaps for centuries before, assimilated to the earth that is around them—and there the minute atoms must be re-assembled into a structure that bears upon it the form, and the lineaments, and the general aspect of a man—and the soul passes into this material framework, which is hereafter to be its lodging-place for ever—and that, not as its prison, but as its pleasant and befitting habitation—not to be trammelled, as some would have it, in a hold of materialism, but to be therein equipped for the services of eternity—to walk embodied among the bowers of our second Paradise—to stand embodied in the presence of our God. . . .

But the highest homage that we know of to materialism, is that which God, manifest in the flesh, has rendered to it. That He, the Divinity, should

have wrapt His unfathomable essence in one of its coverings, and expatiated amongst us in the palpable form and structure of a man ; and that He should have chosen such a tenement, not as a temporary abode, but should have borne it with Him to the place which He now occupies, and where He is now employed in preparing the mansions of His followers,—that He should have entered within the vail, and be now seated at the right hand of the Father, with the very body which was marked by the nails upon His cross, and wherewith He ate and drank after His resurrection—that He who repelled the imagination of His disciples, as if they had seen a spirit, by bidding them handle Him and see, and subjecting to their familiar touch, the flesh and the bones that encompassed Him ; that He should now be throned in universal supremacy, and wielding the whole power of heaven and earth, have every knee to bow at His name, and every tongue to confess, and yet all to the glory of God the Father—that humanity, that substantial and embodied humanity, should thus be exalted, and a voice of adoration from every creature, be lifted up to the Lamb for ever and ever—does this look like the abolition of materialism, after the present system of it is destroyed ; or does it not rather prove, that transplanted into another system, it will be preferred to celestial honours, and prolonged in immortality throughout all ages. . .

But though a paradise of sense, it will not be a

paradise of sensuality. Though not so unlike the present world as many apprehend it, there will be one point of total dissimilarity betwixt them. It is not the entire substitution of spirit for matter, that will distinguish the future economy from the present. But it will be the entire substitution of righteousness for sin. It is this which signalises the Christian from the Mahometan paradise—not that sense, and substance, and splendid imagery, and the glories of a visible creation seen with bodily eyes, are excluded from it,—but that all which is vile in principle, or voluptuous in impurity, will be utterly excluded from it. There will be a firm earth, as we have at present, and a heaven stretched over it, as we have at present ; and it is not by the absence of these, but by the absence of sin, that the abodes of immortality will be characterized. There will both be heavens and earth, it would appear, in the next great administration—and with this speciality to mark it from the present one, that it will be a heaven and an earth, ‘wherein dwelleth righteousness.’—*New Heavens and New Earth.*

II.

IT is not sufficiently adverted to, that the happiness of heaven lies simply and essentially in the well-going machinery of a well-conditioned soul—and that according to its measure, it is the same in kind with the

happiness of God, who liveth for ever in bliss ineffable, because He is unchangeable in being good, and upright, and holy. There may be audible music in heaven, but its chief delight will be in the music of well-poised affections, and of principles in full and consenting harmony with the laws of eternal rectitude. There may be visions of loveliness there ; but it will be the loveliness of virtue, as seen directly in God, and as reflected back again in family likeness from all His children—it will be this that shall give its purest and sweetest transports to the soul. In a word, the main reward of paradise, is spiritual joy—and that, springing at once from the love and the possession of spiritual excellence. It is such a joy as sin extinguishes on the moment of its entering the soul ; and such a joy as is again restored to the soul, and that immediately on its being restored to righteousness. . . .

They do not work there, for the purpose of making out the conditions of a bargain. They do not act agreeably to the pleasures of God, in order to obtain the gratification of any distinct will or distinct pleasure of their own, in return for it. Their will is, in fact, identical with the will of God. There is a perfect unison of taste and of inclination, between the creature and the Creator. They are in their element, when they are feeling righteously, and doing righteously. Obedience is not drudgery, but delight to them ; and as much as there is of the congenial

between animal nature, and the food that is suitable to it, so much is there of the congenial between the moral nature of heaven, and its sacred employments and services.—*Ibid.*

III.

THERE may be crowns of material splendour. There may be trees of unfading loveliness. There may be pavements of emerald—and canopies of brightest radiance—and gardens of deep and tranquil security—and palaces of proud and stately decoration—and a city of lofty pinnacles, through which there unceasing flows a river of gladness, and where jubilee is ever rung with the concord of seraphic voices. But these are only the accessories of heaven. They form not the materials of its substantial blessedness. . . . It consists not in the enjoyment of created good, nor in the survey of created magnificence. It is drawn in a direct stream, through the channels of love and of contemplation, from the fulness of the Creator. It emanates from the countenance of God, manifesting the spiritual glories of His holy and perfect character, on those whose characters are kindred to His own. And if on earth there is no tendency towards such a character—no process of restoration to the lost image of the Godhead—no delight in prayer—no relish for the sweets of intercourse with our Father, now unseen, but then to be revealed to the view of His

immediate worshippers—then, let our imaginations kindle as they may, with the beatitudes of our fictitious heaven, the true heaven of the Bible is what we shall never reach, because it is a heaven that we are not fitted to enjoy. . . .

It is here that heaven begins. It is here that eternal life is entered upon. It is here that man first breathes the air of immortality. It is upon earth that he learns the rudiments of a celestial character, and first tastes of celestial enjoyments. It is here, that the well of water is struck out in the heart of renovated man, and that fruit is made to grow unto holiness, and then, in the end, there is life everlasting. —*Nature of the Kingdom of God.*

IV.

NOTHING is admitted there, which worketh wickedness or maketh a lie ; and that therefore, with every feculence of evil detached and dissevered from the mass, there is naught in heaven but the pure transparent element of goodness—its unbounded love, its tried and unalterable faithfulness, its confiding sincerity. Think of the expressive designation given to it in the Bible, the land of uprightness. Above all think, that, revealed in visible glory, the righteous God, who loveth righteousness, there sitteth upon His throne, in the midst of a rejoicing family—Himself rejoicing over them, because, formed in His own like-

ness, they love what He loves, they rejoice in what He rejoices. There may be palms of triumph ; there may be crowns of unfading lustre ; there may be pavements of emerald, and rivers of pleasure, and groves of surpassing loveliness, and palaces of delight, and high arches in heaven which ring with sweetest melody—but, mainly and essentially, it is a moral glory which is lighted up there ; it is virtue which blooms and is immortal there ; it is the goodness by which the spirits of the holy are regulated here, it is this which forms the beatitude of eternity. The righteous now, who, when they die and rise again, shall be righteous still, have heaven already in their bosoms ; and when they enter within its portals, they carry the very being and substance of its blessedness along with them—the character which is itself the whole of heaven's worth, the character which is the very essence of heaven's enjoyments. . . .

‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.’ ‘Without holiness no man shall see God.’ ‘Into the holy city nothing which defileth or worketh an abomination shall enter.’ These are distinct and decisive passages, and point to that consecrated way, through which alone, the gate of heaven can be opened to us. On this subject, there is a remarkable harmony between the didactic sayings of various books in the New Testament, and the descriptive scenes which are laid before us in the book of Revelation.—*Heaven a Character and not a Locality.*

THE CONSUMMATION OF HAPPINESS.

MATTHEW HENRY.

WHENEVER a good man dies, God takes him, fetches him hence, and receives him to Himself. . . . Enoch's translation was not only an evidence to faith of the reality of a future state, and of the possibility of the body's existing in glory in that state ; but it was an encouragement to the hope of all that walk with God that they shall be for ever with Him. . . .

If the separate soul, at death, do but return to its rest with God, the matter is not great though the deserted body find not at all, or not quickly, its rest in the grave. Yet care ought to be taken of the dead bodies of the saints, in the belief of their resurrection ; for there is a covenant with the dust, which shall be remembered, and a commandment is given concerning the bones. . . .

God has said that *here* . . . His *face shall* not be seen ; that is an honour reserved for the future state, to be the eternal bliss of holy souls : should men in this state know what it is, they would not be content to live short of it. There is a knowledge and enjoyment of God which must be waited for in another world, when we shall *see Him as He is*. . . .

If we faithfully improve the discoveries God gives us of Himself while we are here, a brighter and more glorious scene will shortly be opened to us ; for *to him that hath shall be given*. . . .

When we shall come before the Lord in heaven, to be there for ever speaking with Him, the veil shall not only be taken off from the Divine glory, but from our hearts and eyes, that we may see as we are seen, and know as we are known. . . .

Those that through grace are well acquainted with another world, and have been much conversant with it, need not be afraid to leave this. . . . The soul of a man, of a good man, when it leaves the body, goes upwards, in conformity to which motion of the soul, the body of Moses shall go along with it as far upwards as its earth will carry it. When God's servants are sent for out of the world, the summons runs thus, *Go up and die*. . . . Though his sight was very good, and he had all the advantage of high ground that he could desire for the prospect, yet he could not have seen what he now saw . . . if his sight had not been miraculously assisted and enlarged, and therefore it is said, *The Lord showed it to him*. All the pleasant prospects we have of the better country we are beholden to the grace of God for ; it is He that gives the *spirit of wisdom* as well as the *spirit of revelation*, the eye as well as the object. . . . Such a sight believers now have, through grace, of the bliss and glory of their future

state. The word and ordinances are to them what Mount Pisgah was to Moses ; from them they have comfortable prospects of the glory to be revealed, and rejoice in hope of it. . . . Those may leave this world with a great deal of cheerfulness that die in the faith of Christ, and in the hope of heaven, and with Canaan in their eyes. . . . When God's servants are removed, and must serve Him no longer on earth, they go to serve Him better, to serve Him *day and night in His temple.* . . .

It is a serious thing to die ; it is a work by itself. It is a change ; there is a visible change in the body, its appearance altered, its actions brought to an end, but a greater change with the soul, which quits the body, and removes to the world of spirits, finishes its state of probation and enters upon that of retribution. This change will come and it will be a final change, not like the transmutations of the elements, which return to their former state. No, we must die, not thus to live again. It is but once to die, and that had need be well done that is to be done but once. . . . At the resurrection, 'Thou shalt call me out of the grave, by the voice of the archangel, and I will answer and come at the call.' The body is the *work of God's hands*, and He will have a desire to that, having prepared a glory for it. At death, 'Thou shalt call my body to the grave, and my soul to Thyself, and I will answer, Ready, Lord, ready—coming, coming ; here I am.' . . .

Our heavenly inheritance was mortgaged by sin ; we are of ourselves utterly unable to redeem it ; Christ is near of kin to us, the next kinsman that is able to redeem ; He has paid our debt, satisfied God's justice for sin, and so has taken off the mortgage and made a new settlement of the inheritance. . . . Christ's body saw not corruption, but ours must. And Job mentions this, that the glory of the resurrection he believed and hoped for might shine the more brightly. . . . He comforts himself with the hope of happiness on the other side death and the grave : *After I shall awake* (so the margin reads it), *though this body be destroyed, yet out of my flesh shall I see God.* Soul and body shall come together again. That body which must be destroyed in the grave shall be raised again, a glorious body. . . . The separate soul has eyes wherewith to see God, eyes of the mind ; but Job speaks of seeing Him with eyes of flesh, *in my flesh, with my eyes* ; the same body that died shall rise again, a true body, but a glorified body, fit for the employments and entertainments of that world, and therefore a *spiritual* body. . . . It is the blessedness of the blessed that they shall see God, shall see Him as He is, see Him face to face, and no longer through a glass darkly. . . . ' Whom I shall see for myself,' that is, see and enjoy, see to my own unspeakable comfort. I shall see Him as mine with an appropriating sight. . . .

In this world sorrow is our lot, but in heaven there

is joy. All our joys here are empty and defective, but in heaven there is a fulness of joy. Our pleasures here are transient and momentary, and such is the nature of them that it is not fit they should last long ; but those at God's right hand are pleasures for evermore ; for they are the pleasures of immortal souls in the immediate vision and fruition of an eternal God. . . . That happiness is prepared and designed only for the righteous that are justified and sanctified. They shall be put in possession of it when they awake, when the soul awakes, at death, out of its slumber in the body, and when the body awakes, at the resurrection, out of its slumber in the grave. That blessedness will consist in . . . The immediate vision of God and His glory : *I shall behold Thy face*, not, as in this world, through a glass darkly. The knowledge of God will there be perfected and the enlarged intellect filled with it. . . . Our holiness will there be perfect. *When He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.* A complete and full satisfaction resulting from all this : *I shall be satisfied*, abundantly satisfied with it. . . .

The wicked are chased out of the world, and their souls are required ; but the saints take a walk to another world as cheerfully as they take their leave of this. . . . A child of God may meet the messengers of death and receive its summons with a holy security and serenity of mind . . . bidding a holy defiance

to death, as Paul, *O death ! where is thy sting ?* And there is ground enough for this confidence, because there is no evil in it to a child of God ; death cannot separate us from the love of God, and therefore it can do us no real harm. . . . The saints have God's gracious presence with them in their dying moments ; He is then at their right hand, and therefore why should they be moved ? . . . The Gospel is called *the rod of Christ's strength*, and there is enough in that to comfort the saints when they come to die, and *underneath* them are *the everlasting arms*. . . .

The heavens shall praise Thy wonders, O Lord ! that is, 'The glorious inhabitants of the upper world continually celebrate Thy praises.' *Bless the Lord, you His angels.* The works of God are wonders even to those that are best acquainted and most intimately conversant with them ; the more God's works are known the more they are admired and praised. This should make us love heaven, and long to be there, that there we shall have nothing else to do but to praise God and His wonders. . . .

The memory of many a good man that is dead and gone is still blessed ; but in heaven their remembrance shall be truly everlasting, and the honour of their righteousness shall there endure for ever, with the reward of it, in the *crown of glory that fades not away*. Those that are forgotten on earth, and despised, are remembered there, and honoured, and *their righteousness found unto praise, and honour, and glory ;*

then, at furthest, shall the horn of a good man *be exalted with honour*, as that of the unicorn when he is a conqueror. . . .

There is a glory reserved for all the saints in the future state, for all that are wise, wise for their souls and eternity. A man's wisdom now *makes his face to shine*, but much more will it do so in that state, where its power shall be perfected and its services rewarded. The more good any do in this world, especially to the souls of men, the greater will be their glory and reward in the other world. Those that turn *men to righteousness, that turn sinners from the error of their ways* and help to *save their souls from death*, will share in the glory of those they have helped to heaven, which will be a great addition to their own glory. Ministers of Christ, who have obtained mercy of Him to be faithful and successful, and so are made *burning and shining lights* in this world, shall shine very brightly in the other world, shall shine *as the stars*. Christ is *the sun*, the fountain, of the lights both of grace and glory ; ministers, as stars, shine in both, with a light derived from Him, and a diminutive light in comparison of Him ; yet to those that are *earthen vessels* it will be a glory infinitely transcending their deserts. They shall *shine as the stars* of different magnitudes, some in less, others in greater lustre ; but, whereas the day is coming when the stars shall fall from heaven as leaves in autumn, these stars shall *shine for ever and ever*, shall never set, never be eclipsed.

II.

IT is the perfection of the soul's happiness to *see God*; *seeing Him*, as we may by faith in our present state, is a *heaven upon earth*; and seeing Him as we shall in the future state, is the *heaven of heaven*. To see Him *as He is*, face to face, and no longer through a glass darkly; to see Him as ours, and to see Him and enjoy Him; to see Him and be like Him, and be satisfied with that likeness; and to see Him for ever, and never lose the sight of Him; this is heaven's happiness. . . .

Great is your reward in heaven. . . . It is *in heaven*, future, and out of sight; but well secured, out of the reach of chance, fraud, and violence. God will provide that those who lose *for* Him, though it be life itself, shall not lose *by* Him in the end. Heaven, at last, will be an abundant recompense for all the difficulties we meet with in our way. . . .

Though there be degrees of glory in heaven, yet it will be to all a complete happiness. They that come from the east and west, and so come in late, that are picked up out of *the highways and hedges*, shall sit down *with* Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, at the same feast. In heaven, every vessel will be full, brimful, though every vessel is not alike large and capacious. . . .

The spirits of just men already made perfect are of the same corporation with the innumerable company of angels. Man in his creation was *made a little lower*

than the angels ; but in his complete redemption and renovation will be as the angels ; pure and spiritual as the angels, knowing and loving as those blessed seraphim, ever praising God like them and with them. The bodies of saints shall be raised incorruptible and glorious, like the uncompounded vehicles of those pure and holy spirits, swift and strong, like them. . . .

This is the foundation of the saints' eternal happiness, that they are God's elect. The gifts of love to eternity follow the thoughts of love from eternity ; and *the Lord knows them that are His*. The angels shall be employed to bring them together, as Christ's servants, and as the saints' friends ; we have the commission given them, *Gather My saints together unto Me* ; nay, it will be said to them, *These are your brethren* ; for the elect will then *be equal to the angels*. The elect of God are scattered abroad, there are some in all places, in all nations ; but when that great gathering day comes, there shall not one of them be missing ; distance of place shall keep none out of heaven, if distance of affection do not. . . .

The greatest honour which the kindest master ever did to his most tried servants in this world, is nothing to that weight of glory which the Lord Jesus will confer upon His faithful watchful servants in the world to come. . . . And God's servants, when thus preferred, shall be perfect in wisdom and holiness to bear that weight of glory. . . .

To be eternally glorified is to go in with Christ to the marriage, to be in His immediate presence, and in the most intimate fellowship and communion with Him in a state of eternal rest, joy, and plenty. . . .

The state of the blessed is a state of joy, not only because all tears shall then be wiped away, but all the springs of comfort shall be opened to them, and the fountains of joy broken up. Where there are the vision and fruition of God, a perfection of holiness, and the society of the blessed, there cannot but be a fulness of joy. This joy is the *joy of their Lord*; the joy which He Himself has purchased and provided for them; the joy of the redeemed, bought with the sorrow of the Redeemer. . . .

He calls them *to come*: this *come* is, in effect, ‘*Welcome*, ten thousand welcomes, to the blessings of My Father; come to Me, come to be for ever with Me; you that followed Me bearing the cross, now come along with Me wearing the crown. The blessed of My Father are the beloved of My soul, that have been too long at a distance from Me; come, now, come into My bosom, come into My arms, come into My dearest embraces!’ Oh, with what joy will this fill the hearts of the saints in that day! . . . Now the Spirit saith, *Come*, in the word; and the Bride saith, *Come*, in prayer; and the result hereof is a sweet communion: but the perfection of bliss will be, when *the King shall say, Come*. . . .

It is a Father’s house: *My Father’s house*; and His

Father is our Father, to whom He was now ascending ; so that in right of their Elder Brother all true believers shall be welcome to that happiness as to their home. . . . There are *mansions* there. Distinct dwellings, an apartment for each. . . . Though all shall be swallowed up in God, yet our individuality shall not be lost there. . . . There are *many* mansions, for there are many sons to be brought to glory, and Christ exactly knows their number, nor will be straitened for room by the coming of more company than He expects. . . . Heaven would have been an *unready* place for a Christian if Christ were not there. He went to prepare a table for them, to prepare thrones for them. Thus Christ declares the fitness of heaven's happiness for the saints, for whom it is prepared.

III.

BETWEEN a minute and a million years there is a proportion ; between time and eternity none.

It is death indeed that is before us ; but first. It is but the shadow of death ; there is no substantial evil in it : the shadow of a serpent will not sting nor the shadow of a sword kill.

It is the valley of the shadow—deep indeed, and dark and dirty ; but the valleys are fruitful, and so is death itself fruitful of comforts to God's people.

It is but a walk in this valley, a gentle pleasant

walk. . . . It is a walk through it, they shall not be lost in this valley, but get safe to the mountains of spices on the other side.

There are more good people in the world than some wise and holy men think there are. Their jealousy of themselves and for God, makes them think the corruption is universal; but God sees not as they do. When we come to heaven, as we shall miss a great many whom we thought to have met there, so we shall meet a great many whom we little thought to have met there. God's love often proves larger than man's charity, and more extensive.*

* On this passage Dr. A. B. Grosart has this note:—‘This is the source of similar sayings variously ascribed to (I think) John Newton, Richard Cecil, and others—with the addition, “The greatest surprise of all will be to find myself there.”’

THE HEAVENLY STATE.

RICHARD PRICE, D.D.

I.

NO person who ever makes any serious reflections, can avoid wishing earnestly to be satisfied, Whether there is a future state? And if there is, What expectations he ought to entertain with respect to it, and by what means his happiness in it must be secured? . . . This subject as it appears to the eye of unassisted reason, is involved in much darkness. That in the future state all men shall receive an *adequate retribution*, we may in general *know*; but, had we nothing to guide us besides natural light, we could not go much further on any sure grounds, or give a satisfactory reply to several very interesting inquiries. . . . There are probably but few who have felt what it is to be deprived by death of persons they loved, whose thoughts have not been a good deal employed on this point. What, on such occasions, we must desire *chiefly* to know is, that our friends are happy; but it is unavoidable to inquire further concerning them with some anxiety, whether we are likely ever to see them again. It would be dismal to think of a departed friend or relative, that 'he is gone from us for ever,' that 'he exists no more to

us.' . . . One of the unspeakable comforts attending the belief of a future state, arises from the hope it gives of having our friendships perpetuated, and being re-united in happier regions to those whom we have loved and honoured here. . . . We have great reason to believe, that all the scenes of this life will, in the future life, be presented to our memories, and that we shall then recover the greatest part, if not the whole of our present consciousness. The Scriptures teach us this in a very striking manner. It is not therefore to be doubted, but that we shall hereafter have a distinct remembrance of our friends and kindred ; and this remembrance, one would think, must be attended with some revival of particular regard, and have a tendency to draw us to one another, as far as it will be possible or proper.

II.

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WE are, perhaps, apt sometimes to carry our notions too far of the difference between what we now are, and what we shall be in the next stage of our being. It would be absurd to suppose, that we shall hereafter want all particular desires and propensities. Benevolence, curiosity, self-love, the desire of honour, and most of our more noble and generous affections, will not decrease, but grow as the perfection of our intellectual nature grows : and even our present social *instincts* may leave effects on our

tempers which may produce an everlasting union of souls, and lay the foundation of sentiments and desires which shall never be lost.

It is groundless and unnatural to imagine, that after passing through this life, they will be removed to different worlds, or scattered into different regions of the universe. The language of the Scriptures seems plainly and expressly to determine the contrary. They acquaint us, that mankind are to be raised from the dead *together*, and to be judged *together*; and that the righteous, after the general resurrection and judgment, are to be taken together to the same heavenly state, there to live and reign with Christ, and to share in His dignity and happiness. When in the Epistle to the Hebrews, we are said, in consequence of the clear discoveries made by the gospel of a future state, to be, as it were, already come to the *city of the living God, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, and to the spirits of just men made perfect*: it is plainly implied, that we are to join the general assembly of just men and of angels in the realms of light, and to be fixed in the same mansions with them.

III.

WHAT then will it be for *friends* to meet *friends*, *with them* and *kindred* to meet *kindred*? What will it be, after obtaining a complete conquest over death, to be

restored to those who are now dear to us as our own souls, and to whose example and instructions we are, perhaps, indebted for the highest blessings? With what delight will the pious parent meet his children, the husband the wife, and the master his family? How will many good men, now of opposite sentiments, rejoice to see one another in bliss, and to find those errors corrected and those silly prejudices removed, which here keep them at a distance from one another? How will the faithful clergyman rejoice with those of his flock who have profited by his labours, and whom he has been the means of reclaiming from vice, or improving in goodness? What congratulations and mutual welcomings, may we suppose, will then take place? . . . How agreeable will it be to review together the conversations which they have with one another in this state of darkness, and to recollect and compare the scenes they now pass through, the doubts that now perplex them, the different parts they now act, and the different temptations and trials with which they struggle? Are such views and reflections all visionary? Surely they are not. . . .

Our friends will then have lost their present weaknesses. They will not then be such frail and helpless beings as we now see them. They will not be liable to be ensnared by temptations, or ruffled by unreasonable passions. They will not be hasty in their judgments, capricious in their tempers, or nar-

row in their opinions. Every wrong bias will be taken from their wills, and the imperfections, which now render them less amiable, will be removed. Our hearts shall nevermore ache for their troubles, or feel anguish on their account. They will be past all storms, cured of all follies, and eased of all pains. They will appear in finished dignity and honour, after the education and discipline of this world, and be endowed with every excellence which we can wish them to have. What pleasure will it give to meet them in these circumstances? How delightful will be our intercourse with them when they, together with ourselves, shall be thus changed.

IV.

IN the future world, there will be no such painful separations from our friends as we now suffer. It can scarcely be said that we have in this life, more than just time enough to begin friendships, and to feel the pangs of sorrow that attend the dissolution of them. But in the heavenly state, we shall feel no sorrow of this kind. Our friends will be *immortal*. Our happiness in them will be liable to no abatements from the sad apprehension of being soon parted from them, and seeing them sink under decay and sickness. We shall never be witnesses to any such shocking scenes as their expiring agonies. The cruel hand of death will not be able there to reach them, and to tear them from our embraces. They

friends

will flourish in eternal health and vigour, and be with us *for ever with the Lord*.

The prospect, in general, of a future state, must have a most friendly influence on our present enjoyments. What, indeed, is human life without such a prospect? What darkness rests upon it, when we consider it as no more than a passing shadow, *which appeareth for a little while and then vanisheth away*; or, as a short period of tumultuous bustle and uncertain happiness diminished by many vexations, with an infinite blank before and behind it? Such a view of life deprives its pleasures of their relish. It is enough to chill all our thoughts, and to break every spring of noble action within us. But if, in reality, this life is only an *introduction* to a better life, or the feeble *infancy* of an existence that shall never end, it appears with unspeakable dignity; it has an infinitely important end and meaning; all its enjoyments receive an additional relish, and the face of nature will shine with greater beauty and lustre. In particular, the consideration of the circumstance relating to our future existence on which I have been insisting, will communicate new joy to all our present *friendships*. The reflection on our friends as heirs with us of the same blessed immortality, as persons whom we shall meet in the regions of heavenly bliss and live with for ever, must cheer our minds in all our intercourse with them, and cause us to look upon them with the highest affection and delight.

V.

Mind
heaven

IT is, I think, very credible that death is an event, for which, such creatures as we are, might not at first be designed. It looks like a break in our existence, attended with such circumstances, as may well incline us to believe, that it is a *calamity* in which we have been involved, rather than a *method of transition* from one state of existence to another, originally appointed by our Creator and common under His government. This, the Scriptures declare plainly to be the real fact : but then, it should be remembered, that the same Scriptures inform us further, that we have a great Deliverer, who came into the world, *that we might have life* ; and who, *by death has destroyed death and him who had the power of death, and obtained for us everlasting redemption.* . . .

It gives us, in the present life, a pleasure of the highest kind, to converse with wise and worthy men amidst all our present imperfections, and notwithstanding the certain prospect of being in a little while parted by death. What then will it be to join the general assembly of the great and good in the heavens ; to be restored there to those who are now the desire of our eyes and the joy of our hearts ; to converse with them when freed from every weakness and adorned with every amiable quality, and to make a part of the glorious company of Christ's faithful followers at His second coming ? What

will it be, not only to have our present friendships thus perpetuated, but to commence new ones with superior beings ; to live and reign with the Saviour of sinful mortals, and to be for ever improving, . . . under the eye and care of the Almighty ?

VI.

WE are now frail, feeble, ignorant, and helpless. We think, we speak, and act like children ; but, in a little time, we shall be advanced to a more perfect state, and receive our complete consummation in soul and body in everlasting glory. Soon the darkness of this world will vanish, every weight will be removed from our aspiring minds, our highest faculties gain full scope for exertion, and unclouded endless day dawn upon us. We shall be brought to *the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to God the Judge of all.* We have latent powers which it may be the business of eternity to evolve. We are capable of an infinite variety of perceptions and sensations, which are now as incomprehensible to us, as the enjoyments of a grown man are to an infant in the womb. Our present existence is but the first step of an ascent in dignity and bliss, which will never come to an end. How amazing and ecstatic this prospect ! What shall we some time or other be ?

THE WORLD TO COME.

JOHN BUNYAN.

I.

I WOULD discourse a little of the state of our body and soul in heaven. . . . Of the soul ; it will then be filled in all the faculties of it with as much bliss and glory as ever it can hold. The understanding shall then be perfect in knowledge—‘ Now we know but in part ; ’ we know God, Christ, heaven, and glory, but in part ; ‘ but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.’ Then shall we have perfect and everlasting visions of God, and that blessed One His Son Jesus Christ, a good thought of whom doth sometimes so fill us while in this world, that it causeth ‘ joy unspeakable and full of glory.’ Then shall our will and affections be ever in a burning flame of love to God and His Son Jesus Christ ; our love here hath ups and downs, but there it shall be always perfect with that perfection which is not possible in this world to be enjoyed. Then will our conscience have that peace and joy that neither tongue nor pen of men or angels can express. Then will our memory be so enlarged to retain all things

that happened to us in this world, so that with unspeakable aptness we shall call to mind all God's providences, all Satan's malice, all our own weaknesses, all the rage of men, and how God made all work together for His glory and our good, to the everlasting ravishing of our hearts.

For our body; it shall be raised in power in incorruption, a spiritual body and glorious. . . . It is compared to 'the brightness of the firmament,' and to the shining of the stars 'for ever and ever.' . . . 'Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.' . . . Their state is then to be equally glorious with the angels . . . Then this our vile body shall be like the glorious body of Jesus Christ. And now, when body and soul are thus united, who can imagine what glory they both possess? They will now be both in capacity, without jarring, to serve the Lord with shouting thanksgivings, and with a crown of everlasting joy upon their head.

In this world there cannot be that harmony and oneness of body and soul as there will be in heaven. Here the body sometimes sins against the soul, and the soul again vexes and perplexes the body with dreadful apprehensions of the wrath and judgment of God. While we be in this world, the body oft hangs this way, and the soul the quite contrary; but there, in heaven, they shall have that perfect union as never to jar more; but now the glory of

the body shall so suit with the glory of the soul, and both so perfectly suit with the heavenly state, that it passeth words and thoughts. . . .

It is a city. It is called heaven. It is called God's house. It is called a kingdom. It is called glory. It is called Paradise. It is called everlasting habitations. . . . They shall stand and live in the presence of the glorious God, the Judge of all. They shall be with the Lamb, the Lord Jesus. They shall be with an innumerable company of holy angels. They shall be with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of heaven. . . . They shall be clothed with the garment of salvation. This raiment is called white raiment, signifying, their clean and innocent state in heaven. 'And they,' says Christ, 'shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.' . . . They shall also have crowns of righteousness, everlasting joy and glory. . . . It is everlasting. 'And this is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life.' It is life eternal. 'My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give unto them eternal life.' It is world without end. 'But Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation; he shall not be ashamed nor confounded world without end.'—*Saved by Grace.*

II.

OUR house, our hope, our mansion-house, and our incorruptible and undefiled inheritance is in heaven. This is called the eternal inheritance, of which we that are called have received the promise already. This inheritance, I say, He has gone to choose for us in the heavens, because by His blood He obtained it for us. And this we are commanded to wait for ; but how ridiculous, yea, how great a cheat would this be, had He not by His blood obtained it for us. . . . He delivered us by His blood, and obtained the kingdom of heaven for us, and hath promised that He would go and prepare our places, and come again and fetch us thither—‘And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, *there* ye may be also.’ This, then, is the cause that we wait for Him, we look for the reward of the inheritance at His coming who have served the Lord Christ in this world. . . . A Saviour He was at His first coming, and a Saviour He will be at His second coming. At His first coming, He bought and paid for us ; at His second coming, He will fetch us to Himself. At His first coming He gave us promise of the kingdom ; at His second coming He will give us possession of the kingdom. At His first coming, He also showed us how we should be, by His own transfiguration ; at His second coming, ‘He will change our vile body, that it may

be fashioned like unto His glorious body.' . . . His coming is called our blessed hope. . . . A blessed hope indeed, if He hath bought our persons with His blood, and an eternal inheritance for us in the heavens; a blessed hope indeed, if also at His coming we be certainly carried thither. No marvel, then, if saints be bid to wait for it, and if saints themselves long for it.—*Light for them that Sit in Darkness.*

III.

The nature of man, *our* nature, is got into glory as the first-fruits of mankind, as a forerunner to take possession till we all come thither. For the Man born at Bethlehem is ascended, which is part of the lump of mankind, into glory as a public person, as the first-fruits, representing the whole of the children of God; so that in some sense it may be said that the saints have already taken possession of the kingdom of heaven by their Jesus, their public person, He being in their room entered to prepare a place for them. . . . When Jesus Christ came down from glory, it was that He might bring us to glory; and that He might be sure not to fail, He clothed Himself with our nature, as if one should take a piece out of the whole lump instead of the whole, until the other comes, and investeth it in that glory which He was in before He came down from heaven. And thus is that saying to be understood, speaking of

Christ and His saints, which saith, 'And' He 'hath raised *us* up together and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus.'—*The Law and Grace Unfolded*.

IV.

THERE are things that 'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor that have entered into the heart of man to conceive of.'

They are things too big as yet to enter into our hearts, and things too big, if they were there, to come out, or to be expressed by our mouths.

There is heaven itself, the imperial heaven; does anybody know what that is? There is the Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, and the innumerable company of angels; doth anybody know what all they are? There is immortality and eternal life: and who knows what they are? There are rewards for services, and labour of love showed to God's name here; and who knows what they will be? There are mansion-houses, beds of glory, and places to walk in among the angels; and who knows what they are? There will be badges of honour, harps to make merry with, and heavenly songs of triumph; doth any here know what they are? There will be then a knowing, an enjoying, and a solacing of ourselves with prophets, apostles, and martyrs, and all saints; but in what glorious manner we all are ignorant of. There we shall see

and know, and be with for ever, all our relations, that have died in the faith; but how gloriously they will look when we see them, and how gloriously we shall love when we are with them, it is not for us in this world to know. There are thoughts, and words, and ways for us, which we never dreamed on in this world. The law was but the shadow, the gospel the image; but what will be the substance that comes to us next, or that rather we shall go unto, who can understand?

Alas! all the things in this world will not fill one heart; and yet one thought that is right, of the things that God has prepared, and laid up in heaven for us, will, yea, and over fill it too.—*Israel's Hope Encouraged.*

V.

THERE is about that throne 'four and twenty seats, and upon the seats four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment, and they have on their heads crowns of gold.' There is no throne that has these signs and effects belonging to it but this; wherefore, as by these signs, so by the effects of them also, one may know which is, and so when he is indeed come to the throne of grace. . . . By seats I understand places of rest and dignity; places of rest, for that they that sit on them do rest from their labours; and places of dignity, for that they

are about the throne. . . . And forasmuch as the seats are mentioned, before they are mentioned that sat thereon, it is to show, that the places were prepared before they were converted. . . . Their sitting denoteth also their abiding in the presence of God. . . . Their white robes are Christ's righteousness, their own good works and glory; not that their works brought them thither, for they were of themselves polluted, and were washed white in the blood of the Lamb; but yet God will have all that His people have done in love to Him to be rewarded. Yea, and they shall wear their own labours, being washed as afore is hinted, as a badge of their honour before the throne of grace, and this is grace indeed. 'They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, therefore are they before the throne of God.' They have washed as others did do before them. 'And they had on their heads crowns of gold.' This denotes their victory, and also that they are kings, and as kings shall reign with Him for ever and ever.

But what! were they silent? did they say, did they do nothing while they sat before the throne? Yes, they were appointed to be singers there. This was signified by the four and twenty that we make mention of before, who with their sons were instructed in the songs of the Lord, and all that were cunning to do so then, were two hundred fourscore and eight. These were the figure of that hundred forty and four

thousand redeemed from the earth. For as the first four and twenty, and their sons, are said to sing and to play upon cymbals, psalteries, and harps; and as they are there said to be instructed and cunning in the songs of the Lord; so these that sit before the throne are said also to sing with harps in their hands their song before the throne; and such song it was, and so cunningly did they sing it, that 'no man could learn it, but the hundred and forty and four thousand which were redeemed from the earth.'

. . . This numberless number seems to have got the song by the end; for they cry aloud, 'Salvation, salvation to our God and to the Lamb'; which to be sure is such a song that none can learn but them that are redeemed from the earth.—*The Saint's Privilege and Profit.*

VI.

WHAT a brave encouragement is it for one that is come for grace to the throne of grace, to see so great a number already there, on their seats, in their robes, with their palms in their hands, and their crowns upon their heads, singing of salvation to God, and to the Lamb! And I say again, and speak now to the dejected, methinks it would be strange, O thou that art so afraid that the greatness of thy sins will be a bar unto thee, if amongst all this great number of pipers and harpers that are got to glory, thou canst

not espy one that when here was as vile a sinner as thyself. Look, man, they are there for thee to view them, and for thee to take encouragement to hope, when thou shalt consider what grace and mercy has done for them. Look again, I say, now thou art upon thy knees, and see if some that are among them have not done worse than thou hast done. And yet behold, they are set down ; and yet behold they have their crowns on their heads, their harps in their hands, and sing aloud of salvation to their God, and to the Lamb. . . . Behold, tempted soul, dost thou not yet see what a throne of grace here is, and what multitudes are already arrived thither, to give thanks unto His name that sits thereon, and to the Lamb for ever and ever ? And wilt thou hang thy harp upon the willows, and go drooping up and down the world, as if there was no God, no grace, no throne of grace, to apply thyself unto, for mercy and grace to help in time of need ? Hark ! dost thou not hear them what they say, ‘ Worthy,’ say they, ‘ is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven,’ where they are, ‘ and on earth,’ where thou art, ‘ and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.’—*Ibid.*

VII.

YOU are going now . . . to the paradise of God, wherein you shall see the tree of life, and eat of the never-fading fruits thereof; and when you come there, you shall have white robes given you, and your walk and talk shall be every day with the King, even all the days of eternity. There you shall not see again such things as you saw when you were in the lower regions upon the earth; to wit, sorrow, sickness, affliction, and death, 'for the former things are passed away.' You are now going to Abraham, to Isaac, and Jacob, and to the prophets; men that God hath taken away from the evil to come, and that are now resting upon their beds, each one walking in his uprightness. . . . You must there receive the comforts of all your toils, and have joy for all your sorrow; you must reap what you have sown, even the fruit of all your prayers and tears, and sufferings for the King by the way. In that place you must wear crowns of gold, and enjoy the perpetual sight and vision of the Holy One, for 'there you shall see Him as He is.' There also you shall serve Him continually with praise, with shouting and thanksgiving, whom you desired to serve in the world, though with much difficulty, because of the infirmity of your flesh. There your eyes shall be delighted with seeing, and your ears with hearing, the pleasant voice of the Mighty One. There you shall enjoy your friends again that

are gone thither before you ; and there you shall with joy receive even every one that follows into the holy place after you. There also shall you be clothed with glory and majesty, and put into an equipage fit to ride out with the King of glory. . . .

And, lo ! as they entered they were transfigured, and they had raiment put on them that shone like gold. There was also that met them with harps and crowns, and gave them to them—the harps to praise withal, and the crowns in token of honour. Then I heard in my dream that all the bells in the city rang again for joy, and that it was said unto them, ‘ENTER YE INTO THE JOY OF YOUR LORD.’ I also heard the men themselves, that they sang with a loud voice, saying, ‘BLESSING, AND HONOUR, AND GLORY, AND POWER, BE UNTO HIM THAT SITTETH UPON THE THRONE, AND UNTO THE LAMB FOR EVER AND EVER.’ . . .

I looked in after them, and behold the city shone like the sun ; the streets also were paved with gold, and in them walked many men, with crowns on their heads, palms in their hands, and golden harps to sing praises withal. There were also of them that had wings, and they answered one another without intermission, saying, ‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord.’ And after that they shut up the gates ; which when I had seen, I wished myself among them.—*The Pilgrim's Progress*.

IMMORTALITY.

EDWARD IRVING, M.A.

I.

THUS the soul, when she betaketh herself to consult the counsels of the Lord, cometh to love Him at every step of discovery, and to admire His mercy and forgiveness and most disinterested goodness towards her, while she lay enveloped in darkness. How much more doth she admire and magnify His name, when, besides recovering the two lost provinces of creation and providence, she comes to know the two new provinces of grace and glory, prepared for her and for all who walk in the ways of holiness.

Then she beginneth to burst the shell of her former darkness, and to open her eyes on light ; her callow nakedness sprouteth with a Divine plumage ; she spreadeth her wings and ariseth to heaven, and floateth over the oceans of eternity ; she soareth like the eagle, and looketh steadily into the face of God ; she feeleth for the Divine Spirit within her, and setteth her heart upon all excellency. . . . She comprehendeth the fulness of His grace, and bindeth herself to holiness with cords of love, and rejoiceth in God as all her salvation and all her joy.

Then cometh into view the end and consummation

of His love—the fulness of future glory, worthy, and alone worthy, to follow such a procession of creation and providence and grace, the three visible kingdoms of the Almighty's bounty. This body—the seed-bed of pains and diseases, the nurse of appetites and passions strong—shall be renovated most glorious to behold, most durable, most sweetly compacted, and yielding most exquisite sensations of bliss. This society, so ripe with deceivers, betrayers, slanderers, and workers of mischief, shall be winnowed of all its chaff, and constituted anew under God's own government, where shall be conjoined such intimacies and loving unions as will put to the blush friendship and love and brotherhood, and every terrestrial affinity. And the soul, which here doth peep and feel about the surface of things, shall there dive into all the mysteries of knowledge. And intuition shall see far and near the essences of all created things. And all intelligence shall fan flames of benevolence, and feed eternal purposes of well-doing to every creature within our reach. All heaven shall smile for us ; and for us every neighbouring creature shall labour, and we for them, and angels with the sons of men shall exchange innocent love, and the creatures under man shall serve him with love, and drink from him their joy as we drink our joy from the service of God. Oh! who shall tell the glory of those new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. The imagery of inspired minds is exhausted on the theme, and all

their descriptions, I am convinced, fall as far short of the reality, as the description of Nature's beauty falls short of the sight and feeling of her charms. All language is a pale reflection of thought, all thought a pale reflection of present sensation, and all sensation this world hath ever generated, a sickly, faint idea of what shall be generated hereafter in the soul and body of man.

II.

IT seemeth to me, that what we call the day of judgment, we shall thereafter call the day of second creation, on which God launched our being anew, and furnished our voyage of existence the second time ; and it may be recounted by us in one short chapter at the beginning of the sacred annals of our new world, even as our present creation is recounted in the Bible ; and prove to us when it is past, as incomprehensible a work, as it now doth seem to us, looking forward, or as incomprehensible as creation seemeth to us, looking backward ; and, though incomprehensible, it may be always as present to our feeling and our observation as the objects of creation are, and as demonstrative of God's justice as creation is demonstrative of His power.

If I were to venture an opinion upon the manner of the action, it would be this : that it will take place, not by a successive summons of each individual, and a successive inquisition of his case, but by an instan-

taneous separation of the two classes the one from the other. Nor do I fancy to myself the bodily presence of any judge, or the utterance by His lips of vocal sounds, although it be so written, any more than I fancy a loud voice to have been uttered by the Eternal for the light to come forth at first, or any other part of the material universe to arise into being. But I rather think it to be more congenial to the other works of God, when it is imagined that our souls, and the bodies re-created for their use, will be planted, without knowing how, each class in the abodes prepared for them ; and that they will not be consulted about the equity of the measure. God will leave them to find out the rectitude of the proceeding, as He left us to find out the rectitude of His proceeding at the fall. He told Adam of the loss of Paradise. If Adam had speculated thereon, he would have found himself unequal to the speculation. Yet the word of the Lord stood fast, and man found himself stripped and denuded, in the twinkling of an eye, of his pristine glory and innocence. God did not bandy the question with him, nor try conclusions at a human bar. The thing came about by moral laws of being, older than the creation—yea, old as the eternal existence of God ; and, in the same manner, by laws of being equally old and sure, will come about the opening of Paradise again to the righteous, and the barring of hope and happiness to the wicked. . . .

When the end of all things hath come, and the re-

novation of all things hath taken place, I reckon that the bodies of men will start from their unconscious state of dispersion and dissolution, as the materials of Adam's body came at first from their secret and various places, or as the earth teemed out her various tribes; and that the soul will come from its intermediate sojourn, as Adam's soul came, no one knoweth whence, and be united to her ancient comrade. So the moment the sleep of death is broken by the trump of God, we shall find ourselves, each one ere we wis, with the paradise of heaven overshadowing our heads, or the pavement of hell glowing beneath our feet!

This mode of conceiving the matter, which is the only one congenial to the other operations of the Almighty, doth in no respect do away with the Scripture emblems; for it is no less a judgment because it is so prompt and summary, and it is no less a day of judgment, seeing it is the commencement of a new era, like the days of creation.

III.

THERE must pass upon the soul, when disembodied, various changes of which it is not impossible, though it be difficult, to discern the nature and the effects; for, though none have returned to tell the great effect of death, we all suffer partial deaths, from the effect of which it is possible to reason as to the effect of dissolution itself. We go into the investigation of

that great effect, upon *the principle* that the soul herself passes through death unhurt, that no part of her existence is destroyed ; that she retaineth the same contents of thoughts, feelings, and hopes, on the other, as on this side the dark confines of the grave. Only she loses the enjoyments of the body and the presence of her friends, and her power of conversing with material scenes, but no part of her consciousness is destroyed. . . .

The link is broken and rusted away which joined the soul to the enjoyments or troubles of the present world. No new material investments are given to her, whereby to move again in the midst of these material things ; no eye, nor ear, nor wakeful sense, by which intrusion may come as heretofore into the chambers of her consciousness. Till the resurrection she shall be disunited, and then, being rejoined by her former companions, they shall be submitted to material scenes, again to suffer and enjoy. What is there now to occupy the soul ? there is no world, for with the world she hath no means of conversing ; she is separate, she is alone ; she dwelleth evermore within herself. There is no sensations nor pursuits to take her off from self-knowledge and self-examination. . . . Indeed I can see no other occupation to which she can devote herself in her purely spiritual existence, save this of revoking from oblivion all the past, and calling up from the future all things dreaded or hoped for.

IV.

THESE three things, the embalming of the object lost to sense in memory and hope ; the consciousness of good ends subserved by its removal ; the assurance of better things which cannot be removed—are a sort of sacred tripod to the spirit, which no shock from earth or hell can overturn. They give her a terrible strength before which all pains of soul and body are harmless and all tyrant inflictions defeated. In dungeons, thus sustained, she hath a joy, which the brave Haxtoun declared to be above the enjoyment of life's softest scenes. Martyrs have become unconscious to the cruellest tortures, and in a Divine heat of bravery have rushed again to meet them. And in these quieter times, orphans and widows and afflicted people of every name take refuge thereon, and bear calamities with a magnanimity to which knowledge and philosophy and sentiment are strangers ; and seasons of affliction become to them pregnant with the greatest advantage ; and they know the joy of grief, about which sentimental writers do but prate. One by one they resign the spirits of their dearest kindred into the hand of the Lord's tender mercy. One by one they deposit their earthly tabernacle in the silent tomb, and while the tears of nature follow the much-beloved object, their spirits rise to heaven, and hold communion with the spirit that is gone, and long for the

happy day when they also, being dismantled, shall join it in the realms of immortal bliss. . . . I know not, I speculate not upon, the new unions which the soul will have when these carnal veils are taken off: but much, much are we taught to hope for. We are represented in this state as being all but drifted out of reach of the Divine favour which was not rejoined but by the sternest adventure of mercy; and death being past, we get as it were out of the cold and frozen regions of our present condition, and, by means I know not, are transformed into a holy communion with the celestials. But, though all unconscious how it is to be with her, I know the soul of the righteous doth drop as it were asleep into the lap of God, and hath ravishments of delight between sleeping and waking—images of glory from the other side, signs and beckonings, and triumphant frames which cast the by-standers into silent admiration.

V.

GLORIOUS bodies are not restored to the righteous only to strike a harp, nor imperishable bodies to the wicked only to suffer and not die. To the righteous they are given to renew the connexion between spirit and matter, which is productive even in this fallen world of such exquisite delight; and in order to meet the nicer capacities of these new-formed organs, a new world is created, fair as the sun, beautiful as

the moon, fresh and verdant as the garden of Eden. And around this new habitation of the righteous is thrown a wall like the crystal wall of heaven within which nothing shall enter to hurt or to defile. There shall be no sickness nor sorrow of countenance, and there shall be no more death. There shall be no more stormy passion, with its troublous calm of over-spent rage, and its long wreck of ruin and havoc, which no time can repair. No wars, nor rumours of wars, and bloodshed shall ever again spot the bosom of the ground ; and rivalry shall no longer trouble friendship, nor jealousy, love ; nor shall ambition divide states, which, be they commonwealths or royal sovereignties, will dwell in untroubled peace. The cares of life shall no longer agitate the bosom, and the reverses of life be for ever unknown. Hunger and thirst shall no longer be felt, and the heat of the sun shall not smite by day, nor the moon by night.

Yet will the happy creatures have enough to do, and to enjoy, though there be no misery to comfort, nor evil to stem, nor grief over whose departure to rejoice. Of how many cheap, exquisite joys are these fine senses the inlets ! and who is he that can look upon the beautiful scenes of the morning, lying in the freshness of the dew, and the joyful light of the risen sun, and not be happy ? Cannot God create another world many times more fair ? and cast over it a mantle of light many times more lovely ? and wash it with purer dew than ever dropped from the

eyelids of the morning? Can He not shut up Winter in his hoary caverns, or send him howling over another domain? Can He not form the crystal eye more full of sweet sensations, and fill the soul with a richer faculty of conversing with nature, than the most gifted poet did ever possess? . . . Who knows what new enchantment of melody, what new witchery of speech, what poetry of conception, what variety of design, and what brilliancy of execution, He may endow the human faculties withal :— in what new graces He may clothe nature, with such various enchantment of hill and dale, woodland, rushing stream, and living fountain ; with bowers of bliss and Sabbath-scenes of peace, peopled by a thousand forms of disporting creatures :—so as to make all which the world hath beheld, seem like the gross picture with which you catch infants ; all which the most rapt imagination of Eastern poets hath conceived, seem like the ignorant prattle and rude structures which first delight our childhood and afterwards ashame our riper years ! . . .

Home, that world of nameless charms ; love, that inexhaustible theme of sentiment and poetry ; all relationships, parental, conjugal, and filial, shall arise to a new strength, graced with innocence, undisturbed by apprehension of decay, unruffled by jealousy, and unweakened by time. Heart shall meet heart—

‘ Each other’s pillow to repose divine.’

The tongue shall be eloquent to disclose all its burning emotions, no longer labouring and panting for utterance. . . . What scenes of social life I fancy to myself in the settlements of the blessed, one day of which I would not barter against the greatness and glory of an Alexander or a Cæsar. What new friendships—what new ties of affection—what urgency of well-doing—what promotion of good—what elevation of the whole sphere in which we dwell! till everything smile in ‘Eden’s first bloom,’ and the angels of light, as they come and go, tarry with innocent rapture over the enjoyment of every happy creature. . . . They will come to creatures sinless as themselves, and help forward the mirth and rejoicing of all the people. And the Lord God Himself will walk among us, as He did of old in the midst of the garden! His Spirit shall be in us, and all heaven shall be revealed upon us.

God only knows what great powers He hath of creating happiness and joy. For, this world your sceptic poets make such idolatry of, ’tis a waste, howling wilderness compared with what the Lord our God shall furnish out. The City of our God and the Lamb, whose stream was crystal, whose wall was jasper, and her buildings molten gold, whose twelve gates were each a silvery pearl—doth not so far outshine those dingy, smoky, clayey dwellings of men, as shall that new earth outshine the fairest region which the sun hath ever beheld in his circuit since the birth of time.

VI.

THE harp which the righteous tune in heaven is their heart full of glad and harmonious emotions. The song which they sing is the knowledge of things which the soul coveteth after now, but faintly perceiveth. The troubled fountain of human understanding hath become clear as crystal, they know even as they are known. Wherever they look abroad, they perceive wisdom and glory—within, they feel order and happiness—in every countenance they read benignity and love. God is glorified in all His outward works, and enthroned in the inward parts of every living thing ; and man, being ravished with the constant picture of beauty and contentment, possessed with a constant sense of felicity, utters forth his Maker's praise, or, if he utters not, museth it with expressive silence. . . .

It will be a scene of activity, I have no doubt, activity both of body and of mind, that sensual and physical enjoyments will be multiplied manifold ; that affectionate attachments will yield a thousand times more enjoyment ; that schemes of future good will occupy our thoughts, and enterprises of higher attainments urge our being forward. Then will be the pleasure of the eye, but none of the weariness ; the glow and glory of life, but not its pride ; the thrilling joys of flesh and blood, but none of their odious lusts. In the emblems of Scripture there is a city,

which signifies active life—there is a river, which signifies refreshment—a tree of life, which signifies nourishment ; variety of spontaneous fruit, which signifies gratification of the sense. The gates are not shut all the day, which signifies liberty. There is no night, which signifies no weariness nor treachery. There are the most beautiful gems, which signify wealth and splendour. In short, the Almighty hath planted and decorated the habitation of the just with every object that can captivate the sense, and every enjoyment that can satisfy the mind, with all that is beautiful and noble and good.

VII.

THERE is no life, nor animation, nor play of affection, nor energy of action in that shadowy paradise which hath possessed the imagination of the religious. Lest they should run into the charge of Mahometan sensuality, they have banished out of their delineations all which is seen, tasted or handled, of matter's various forms and affections ; whereupon, I ask them, what then is the use of a body at all, or what the use of a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness ? They shun activity, and shut up all in rest and contemplation, they wrap up whole ages, yea, all eternity in the meditation of one single thought, the thought of our redemption ; whereupon, I ask them, what meaneth the emblem of a city, which all the world over denotes activity, and society and social engagements ; and they are niggard to

admit affection within its walls, save the affection to our Saviour alone ; and, in short, they treat the whole subject as if they would monopolize for God and Christ the whole time, the whole soul, and the whole occupation. And to God and Christ, surely the whole time, and soul, and occupation of the people will be devoted. But how ? not in one act of harping or singing of praise, not in one act of contemplating and resting ; but in the active promotion of every good faculty which inhereth in the renewed soul of man, in the propagation of happiness far and near, in the pursuits of knowledge, and of every enjoyment.

I cannot think of heaven, otherwise than as the perfection of every good thing which my mind conceiveth, the fulfilment of every pious purpose, the gratification of every devout wish, and the perfection of this unfinished creature which I feel myself to be. I hope this body will not faint as now it doth, and languish, and stop short of the energetic purposes of the mind ; I hope that the instruments of thought, within the brain, will not grow numb and refuse obedience to the will ; and that the fountain of feeling in the heart will not subside and dry up, when called upon too much. I hope that time will open its narrow gates, and admit a thousand acts and processes, which it now stranglcth in the narrowness of its porch ; and I would fain add the wings of the morning, that I might travel with the speed of thought to the seats of my affections, and gratify them without constraint.

THE PERFECT WORLD.

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I.

WE are mourning the departed. Nothing can ever make up for their loss ; we have lost them and we mourn with bitter sorrow ; perhaps, the time for tears is past, and the sorrow is to be life-long. They are lost, quite lost to us in this life. ‘Come up hither,’—‘Come up hither,’—says the voice ; and we go, and we find them there, and would not have them back again.

Or, we are troubled as we look forward to the inevitable end of our own life. We shrink from death, from the grave. We listen to the voice of death, and the grave seems to speak to us. But there we are wrong ; we should not be looking forward, but looking upward. We should not be listening to that voice that comes from death, from the grave below, but to that other voice which comes from heaven, and says, ‘Come up hither.’

Thus, we shall become strong, and comforted, under the discipline of life, in all its varied conditions and experiences ; and then, by-and-by, there will come a voice from heaven to us in quite another form from that which we have been considering, and with quite

another meaning attached to it—a voice from God will come to us. When the fatal disease has taken hold upon us, when the decay of nature has advanced, so that it is hastening to dissolution, then the voice may be heard, saying, ‘Come up hither.’ It will be the voice of God in His providence. That is the meaning of that mortal disease, that is the meaning of that slow but sure decay, that is the meaning as He touches you. He is really saying, ‘Come up hither.’ And we shall be ready to go,—or at least not find it very difficult to go ;—go actually, personally, in the entireness of our spiritual personality, if we are accustomed now to go often in thought. That is the great preparation for death—to be so living now in heaven, that when the summons comes we shall be going to a place that is become, to a large extent, a familiar place to us. Become acquainted with God ; become familiar with Christ ; make it your habit to be in heaven ; accustom yourself to be with Him in fellowship with those spirits ; be oftener there with the spirits ; live much there, and then, when the voice says, ‘Come up,’ through the disease, or the decay, it is not likely you will be very loath to go. It has long been the home of your thoughts ; you will not dread to go home. I have heard persons whom I believed not unprepared for the departure to that heavenly world, saying, when it was spoken of to them—saying, ‘Oh, but this world, and all the people in it, are so

real, and all that world is so shadowy.' The invisible God, the invisible Christ, the angels, the spirits that were once clothed with flesh, they are shadowy, unsubstantial: they cannot realize it; it is so strange, unsubstantial. And I have thought sometimes that they found it so difficult then, because they had not been accustomed to go there in their thoughts and affections. Had their conversation been in heaven, had they had much fellowship with Christ, been with the angels and their friends in heaven, instead of with these so much poorer friends on earth, then, when the summons came to go there, it would not have all been so shadowy and unsubstantial as they said it was. And the way to get ready to go is to be heavenly minded. Live much in thought in that heavenly sphere; and then it will not seem a long way, or a very shadowy, strange way to go, when the last word of God to us on earth is spoken,—'Come up hither.'—*'Come up Hither,' in 'Memorials of David Thomas, B.A.'*

II.

How bright are these hopes! how glorious that triumph of the Saviour over the grave, which becomes the pledge of their accomplishment. The eventful week had ended which closed the sojourn of the Lord of life amidst these terrestrial scenes. The moon was shining in the heavens. The stillness of night had covered the dwellings and towers of the guilty city

which had shed the Redeemer's blood. Over that city silence brooded. Through that night the Roman guard had continued watching near the sepulchre, which contained the remains of Him, who had entered it as a captive, but was to leave it as the Conqueror of death. Probably some faint streaks of light were now appearing in the Eastern horizon. But suddenly, the earth quakes ; it reels to and fro. The calm of nature is broken. Terror seizes the affrighted guards, while the solid earth trembles beneath their feet. See ! there is a brighter light ! a light that far eclipses the dawning day. Observe, it draws nearer and nearer, it is a descending angel. His raiment is white as snow, his countenance like lightning. He descends and alights upon the earth near the band of terrified soldiers. They, who knew not fear in the field of battle, but who feared when the earth rocked beneath their feet like the waves of the sea, now tremble till every limb shakes with terror. They become as dead men ; as helpless as the dead, and have no power left to shun the terrifying spectacle, or to fly from the spot. The angel advances to the sepulchre, and to honour Him that lay within its dreary cavern, he rolls away the massy stone. The Lord of glory rises, and leaves the tomb ; but His ministering attendants still watch there, and sit in the sepulchre where the body of Jesus had lain, or on the stone that had closed the entrance of His tomb. While they sit there, His

mourning friends come to honour a departed Lord, but receive from these celestial messengers the welcome tidings that their Lord is risen. O Christian, meditate on these events. View them with intense attention ; commune with these heavenly visitants till you feel your faith strengthened, and your heart glowing with desire to see your risen Lord and to mingle with the angel bands that attended at His sepulchre. What is there in mortal life to be desired, compared with admission to such society ? Eighteen hundred years have passed away since they waited round His sepulchre, or sat upon the stone, yet doubtless life with them is as fair, as young, and as blessed as ever.—J. G. PIKE, in *‘Immanuel the Christian’s Joy.’*

III.

IT is of necessity that our ideas of the heavenly state should be very imperfect and obscure : ‘We walk by faith, not by sight ;’ therefore ‘it doth not yet appear what we shall be.’ One thing, however, we *do* know ; that ‘when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall be ever with the Lord and see Him as He is.’ In one sense we are with Him now : we are united to Him by faith, and are members of His mystical body : our hearts are with Him by love, and we rise after Him into heaven on the wing of hope. Yet there is a great distance in other respects between Him and us. He is in heaven, and

Christ in the

we are upon earth ; He is in Paradise, and we in a desolate, howling wilderness. At this distance, and in these circumstances, we know but little of Him ; our ideas are indistinct and our notions feeble and obscured ; we see through a glass darkly : our sense of His presence is faint and ineffectual either for joy or for holiness : our love to Him is lukewarm and mutable : our converse with Him is by means suited to the infancy of our being ; and our enjoyment of His favours is partial and interrupted :—but we are to see Him and be with Him. Yes, the faithful servant and the gracious, glorious Master are to meet ; they are to inhabit the same heavenly mansion and dwell together in the same ineffable glory.

It cannot have escaped the notice of the most superficial readers of the New Testament, that the most frequent description of the heavenly bliss makes it to consist *in our being with Christ*. In His own sublime prayer He says, ‘ Father, I will that they whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory.’ In His previous address to His disciples He had expressed the same fact. ‘ In My Father’s house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am ye may be also.’ The Apostles take up the idea in their writings. Paul looked to this as *his* heaven, when he said, ‘ I have a desire to depart and be with Christ.’ ‘ Absent from the body, present with the

Lord.' 'So shall we ever be with the Lord: wherefore comfort one another with these words.' John had the same view when he says, 'It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.' Nor ought I to omit the gracious sentence which Christ is represented as passing upon His people at the last day. 'Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.' O blissful sentence! Words of unutterable, inconceivable import! Language of condescending grace, not now to be comprehended! To be acknowledged before the assembled universe not only as His servants, but His *good* and *faithful* servants. To be told that we have served Him faithfully, and told it from the throne of His glory! To hear *Him* say, '*Well done!*' and have the plaudit reverberated in ten thousand times ten thousand echoes from the lips of admiring and adoring angels, till heaven rings with the sound, 'Well done, well done, thou faithful servant of the Lamb.' Nor is this all. 'Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.' 'Come into the same place, yea, into the same joy. Come and dwell with Me and have one felicity common to both.' —JOHN ANGELL JAMES, *in Pulpit Memorials*.

IV.

WHAT we now understand, what we now feel, is only incipient. The principle of development still

must be applied. Of heaven, the pattern and the presage are very imperfect. Then are we required to extend all that we understand, and all that we feel concerning it, to think and to cherish them to the utmost ; while we cannot give them that way and career which they deserve, and even while they fall so unworthily short of the true illimitability. 'It doth not yet appear what we shall be.' Immediate confirmation is yielded to us ; for, who wrote that pregnant sentence ? A man of little mind ? of cold affection ? of lifeless soul ? A man who knew scanty enjoyments of devotion, and possessed narrow opportunities of improvement ? A recluse of the desert, with heart barren as its waste ? A churl who repined beneath his lot ? Nay, it is the disciple who leaned on the bosom of Jesus, who heard and felt the beating of that heart which it enclosed ! 'A door was opened in heaven.' 'Immediately he was in the Spirit.' He stood amidst the celestial wonders. He beheld, he talked, he inquired, he heard ! He saw the great number of the redeemed, which no man can number. He listened to the voices of many angels—'ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands.' The tree of life fanned his brow ; the river of life brightened to his eye, and made sweet music to his ear. He ascertained the admeasurement of that city which is 'continuing,' which 'God hath prepared ;' he counted its gates, he traced its walls, he searched its foundations. He

was collected in all his surveys, and self-possessed in all his thoughts. There is no bewildered manner ; nor does his spirit sink. The spirit of the prophet is subject to the prophet. It was no illusion ; ‘I, John, saw the holy city.’ But, after all, little can he tell. It baffles his report ; and as Paul, in an earlier rapture, had declared that he ‘heard the unspeakable words which it is not lawful for man to utter ;’ so does the beloved disciple, whose heavenly spirit might have retained, if any spirit could, so much of heaven, might have—most readily of all—caught its idea and reflected its splendour and drank its bliss, confess his utter incapacity to set it forth. ‘It doth not yet appear what we shall be.’—RICHARD WINTER HAMILTON, LL.D., D.D., in *‘Pulpit Memorials.’*

V.

CULTIVATE a real desire after complete holiness. It is the truest mark of being born again. It is a sign that God has made us meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. If a nobleman were to adopt a beggar boy, he would not only feed and clothe him, but educate him, and fit him to move in the sphere into which he was afterwards to be brought ; and if you saw this boy filled with a noble spirit, you would say he is meet to be put among the children. So may you be made meet for glory. The farmer does not cut down his corn till it is ripe. So does the

Lord Jesus: He first ripens the soul, then gathers it into His barn. It is far better to be *with* Christ than to be *in* Christ. For you to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Nevertheless, I trust God will keep you a little longer for our sake, that you may pray for us, and encourage us to work on in the service of Jesus till our change come.—R. M. MCCHEYNE.

VI.

THAT time of rejoicing will be, when all the harvest is gathered in, and when the high decisions of the last day shall be announced. Then the whole process of moral cultivation will be completed; the times and seasons, which God hath put in His own power, will run their course; the conquests of His grace will be achieved; and the jubilee of heaven will commence. On that blessed day, when the implements of husbandry shall be laid aside for the emblems of joy, all the husbandmen from every department and stage of employment will assemble. And what a meeting it will be! To think of the entire body of the servants of Christ and God, who have been dispersed through so many ages and such a variety of circumstances congregating, endowed with undecaying powers, in one place of mutual vision and recognition, for ceaseless rest, gratulation, and praise—is it not almost overwhelming in the bare anticipation? There will be lawgivers; there will be prophets; there will be priests and seers; there will

be apostles ; there will be martyrs ; there will be confessors ; there will be reformers ; there will be ministers and teachers ; there will be missionaries. What a noble army ! what a glorious company ! Then each will tell of his trials, and each of his success ; and then shall be the commencement of a sweet interchange between those whose existence, directed by one master impulse, was devoted to the work of redemption and the acquirement of immortality. There will be a magnificent triumphal celebration ; they will sing their victories through the power of their Lord ; they will utter high and rapturous rejoicing over the millions they have gathered for salvation ; and heaven and earth, and angels and men, shall join them ; and, with the mighty multitude which no man can number, they will pass to the mansion of eternity, and thus ‘ SHOUT THE HARVEST-HOME ! ’—JAMES PARSONS, in ‘ *Pulpit Memorials*.’

VII.

JESUS died, rose, lived amongst us for a while, and then was glorified and ascended into heaven. He did not immediately assume His glorified body. I think He rose in the body in which He died, and it was after the forty days that He ascended into heaven, and the great change passed, and humanity in Him became glorified, transcendently glorified. In that humanity He is in heaven, sitting at the

right hand of God. That is the humanity which is the model to which we are hereafter to be conformed. Such is the teaching of the Bible; you have it in this chapter. 'Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself.' I am speaking to you on the assumption that you believe this—not to scientific philosophers who believe nothing. This is the belief of the Christian Church—the Gospel has 'brought life and immortality to light.' But the doctrine of immortality as taught in the Church, is not the same doctrine as that taught in the schools. I look upon the teaching of the immortality of the *soul* as simply philosophy; it is the teaching of the Gentile schools. But the doctrine of the Gospel is this—the immortality of *humanity*; not of the soul, but of the whole nature—body, soul, and spirit, the glorious humanity in which Christ in His glory is the first-fruits. He went through the whole process. There never was a case like His. Some in the olden time were translated, but they didn't die. Some in His time were raised from the dead, but they were raised from natural death to live again.

In Christ the whole process was complete, and in no other; and that ultimate perfection which belongs to Him—humanity glorified in His person—that is what I am to look to as the model to which I am hereafter to be transformed. What is the power of

that? Why, to teach me to reverence the temple of my body and my nature, and to seek by God's grace, so to live that the Divine shekinah may appear now, and be developed hereafter into the glorious perfection of the Son of God.—THOMAS BINNEY, in '*Pulpit Memorials*.'

VIII.

Friends in Heaven

THEY shall have the same body and the same character that they had on earth—a body perfected and transformed like Christ's in His transfiguration, but still the same body—a character perfected and purified from all sin, but still the same character. But in the moment that we who are saved shall meet our several friends in heaven, we shall at once know them, and they will at once know us.

There is something to my mind unspeakably glorious in [this prospect: few things so strike me in looking forward to the good things yet to come. Heaven will be no strange place to us when we get there. We shall not be oppressed by the cold, shy, chilly feeling that we know nothing of our companions. We shall feel at home. We shall see all of whom we have read in Scripture, and know them all, and mark the peculiar graces of each one. We shall look upon Noah, and remember his witness for God in ungodly times. We shall look on Abraham, and remember his faith; on Isaac, and remember his meekness; on Moses,

and remember his patience; on David, and remember all his troubles. We shall sit down with Peter, and James, and John, and Paul, and remember all their toil when they laid the foundations of the Church. Blessed and glorious will that knowledge and communion be! If it is pleasant to know one or two saints, and meet them occasionally now, what will it be to know them all, and to dwell with them for ever!

There is something unspeakably comforting, moreover, as well as glorious in this prospect. It lights up the valley of the shadow of death. It strips the sick-bed and the grave of half their terrors. Our beloved friends who have fallen asleep in Christ are not lost, but only gone before. The children of the same God and partakers of the same grace can never be separated very long. They are sure to come together again when this world has passed away. Our pleasant communion with our kind Christian friends is only broken off for a small moment, and is soon to be eternally resumed. These eyes of ours shall once more look upon their faces, and these ears of ours shall once more hear them speak. Blessed and happy indeed will that meeting be!—better a thousand times than the parting! We parted in sorrow, and we shall meet in joy; we parted in stormy weather, and we shall meet in a calm harbour; we parted amidst pains, and aches, and groans, and infirmities: we shall meet with

glorious bodies, able to serve our Lord for ever without distraction. And, best of all, we shall meet never to be parted, never to shed one more tear, never to put on mourning, never to say good-bye and farewell again. Oh! it is a blessed thought, that saints will know one another in heaven!

How much there will be to talk about! What wondrous wisdom will appear in everything that we had to go through in the days of our flesh! We shall remember all the way by which we were led, and say, 'Wisdom and mercy followed me all the days of my life. In my sicknesses and pains, in my losses and crosses, in my poverty and tribulations, in my bereavements and separation, in every bitter cup I had to drink, in every burden I had to carry, in all these was perfect wisdom.' We shall see it at last, if we never saw it before, and we shall all see it together, and all unite in praising Him that 'led us by the right way to a city of habitation.' Surely, next to the thought of seeing Christ in heaven, there is no more blessed and happy thought than that of seeing one another.—J. C. RYLE, M.A., in '*Shall we Know one another?*'

IX.

THE pleasures of hope will not be unknown in heaven. The hope of heaven will be exchanged for the hope of its continuance. The realization of hope will generate hopes to be hereafter realized.

Joy of Heaven

Hope must ever be present, to add to present joys, the joys of an eternity to come. It is not to be supposed that a creature, however exalted, can take in all heaven at once, or that eternity in its experience becomes an eternal *now*. Its thoughts and feelings and actions must be in succession. Worship supposes this, and service, and fellowship. Without it there might be harmony, but there could be no melody in celestial songs. If hope always abides with the Christian in heaven, and is glorified with him, how much more is its exercise required ere his heaven is complete. The immediate state of true Christians after death, is a state of both exaltation and of humiliation; of exaltation with respect to their souls, and of humiliation with respect to their bodies; of exaltation in comparison with what they were, and of humiliation in comparison with what they will be hereafter. Their happiness is inconceivable to those who remain on the earth. Their mourning is ended, but their happiness is not complete. If their souls are in heaven, their bodies are not even *on* the earth, but *in* the earth; and in a more humiliating state than the bodies of those who remain on the earth. Nor can they be unconscious of this and wholly insensible to the humiliation it implies. Such humiliation may be needful to moderate the first experience of their joys. It may be needful to becloud for a season the full glories of heaven, to give both sunshine and

shade, and to display both the beauty and the power of the rising of an eternal day with healing beneath its wings. It may be needful to discipline the soul for the better use of its bodily frame when restored in a glorified form. . . . It may be needful, too, to promote their conformity to their Lord. As His sorrows were ended and His labours had ceased, but His conquest was not complete, and He was not fully glorified, while His body was in the tomb, so it is with His followers. Yet there is humiliation, and consequently need for the exercise of hope. Of the Lord Himself it is said, His flesh should rest in hope, and that hope was not in the body but in Him. So the spirits of the departed now rest in hope. How long, O Lord ! is their cry. 'And white robes are given to every one of them, and it is said unto them that they should rest yet for a little season until their fellow servants also, and their brethren should be fulfilled.' They are evidently therefore in a waiting state, and retain the same hope, in a measure, which they had upon the earth ; for 'not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.' The Christian's hope, so far from terminating in the happiness of the soul after death, is carried forward in Scripture to an ulterior event to be simultaneously participated by all. 'Looking,' says Paul, 'for the blessed hope,

even the glorious appearing of the Great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ.' 'Be sober,' says Peter, 'and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.' It is in perfect harmony, therefore, with Christian experience that Bunyan represents Hopeful as the companion of Pilgrim, not merely *to* heaven, but *in* heaven.—GEORGE ROGERS, in '*The Sword and the Trowel*.'

X.

How pure, how bright, how glorious, these mansions prepared for you! these mansions in which you are, even now by right, and in anticipation, seated. A great city—a holy city—the tabernacle of God—paved with gold—garnished with all manner of precious stones—every gate a pearl—but above all, and to crown all, 'the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb, the temple and the light thereof.' What manner of persons ought you to be, in all manner of conversation and godliness? How heavenly a conversation becomes so heavenly a habitation! How bright should shine the graces of those who are the possessors of such bright abodes! How white should be their robes who walk as it were in the presence chamber of the Deity; white through the blood of the Lamb, white through the sanctifying graces of His Spirit! . . .

If the purple of sovereignty, and the glory of an earthly palace, seem to require a certain comeliness

of person and dignity of demeanour in those that approach them, how much more should the brightness of your heavenly habitation, and the awful sanctity of that Being, whose perfections lighten it, inspire you with the chaste desire of clothing yourselves in all the splendour of the priestly robes, in all the comeliness of heavenly graces, in all the beauties of spotless holiness. . . .

What manner of persons ought those, who are entitled to privileges so unspeakably vast and glorious, to be, in all manner of conversation and godliness! How should their affections rise on the wings of hope and heavenly desire, rise to sit with Christ in heavenly places! Their moderation should be known unto all men. They should be careful for nothing. They should rejoice in the Lord always. They should approve themselves as the sons of God and heirs of glory, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, by being blameless and harmless, and shining as lights amidst the darkness of this present world; they should now plead their rights, and maintain their privileges; they should now claim the benefit of that charter, that puts sin, Satan, death, and hell beneath their feet; they should now enjoy the glorious liberty, and forestall the triumphs and the joys of heaven. Thus, and thus alone, will they walk worthy of their high vocation and calling. . . .

When the winter of sin and sorrow is past, the

Bridegroom's voice shall be heard addressing His Church, His beloved, and saying, 'Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away. For lo! the winter is past, the rain is over and gone! Arise, My love, My fair one, come away!' Thus shall He speak, nor speak in vain: at that voice His bride shall come forth; come forth from the grave of its vile and corruptible body, and, clothed with the garments of salvation, covered with the robes of glory, shall go away from suffering, sorrow, and death, into the city that hath foundations—into the presence and joy of her God, her Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier, and everlasting inheritance.—HENRY VAUGHAN, B.A., *Vicar of Crickhowel*.

XI.

HERE all is fluctuating and uncertain, but *there* all things continue the same, in goodness and delight. The sun never goes down, the moon withdraws not its shining; the fields never lose their verdure, nor the flowers their odour; the river of pleasure rolls along without interruption; it never subsides, and is never dry. *Here* we are the subjects of perpetual vicissitudes; *there* we are pillars in the temple of our God. *Here* we are mariners at sea, where the treacherous calm may speedily be followed by a tempest, and the brightest sun be suddenly eclipsed; but *there* reign perpetual tranquillity and joy. There is no

night there. All things *here* are infected with an incurable taint of mortality. Men die, their dwellings moulder into dust, and their works inherit their author's frailty ; their brightest deeds are forgotten ; their monuments themselves need memorials. But all things *there* are immortal. Death is there swallowed up in victory. It is an abolished thing ; once known experimentally by us here, but there to be known no more for ever. The society never breaks up ; the bonds that unite them never dissolve. Above all, sin is effectually and for ever excluded. This is the jarring note that runs through the present creation, and throws all into discord. But sin is never seen or felt in the regions of bliss. The groans of Christians for sin, as well as for every other evil, shall there cease for ever. Not an impure thought shall ever rise to blight any of the innumerable joys of that happy abode. . . .

As nothing animated the Grecian wrestler and racer in the contest more than an occasional glance at the prize, exhibited to view on the summit of the goal, so nothing more effectually inspirits the Christian racer and wrestler than anticipations of the crown of life. Faith and hope, by their excursions to the celestial city, and the report they bring from thence, as well as the specimen they give of its enjoyments, are the two faithful spies by whose representations Christians are borne up under all the difficulties of their wilderness travel, and saved

from being beguiled by its occasional blandishments and led to forsake the toilsome way. . . .

The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob *is not the God of the dead, but of the living*; but how living, if there be nothing but dead souls? No; the *body* is dead because of sin, but the *spirit* is life because of righteousness. He who commended His own soul at death to His Father, and promised the penitent thief an entrance with Him that day into Paradise, will come at death to receive our spirits to Himself, that they may be with Him where He is, and behold His glory. What consolation under the loss of pious friends! When we are bereaved of those whom we have tenderly loved, and with whom we have been intimately associated, a part of ourselves seems to be taken away. They furnished so large a portion of our habitual associations and ideas; they received into their hopes and fears, their sorrows and their joys, so many of our sympathies, that their removal draws us in a manner after them, and leads us to be perpetually following them in our thoughts. This loss still more absorbs our thoughts if advanced in years. There comes a time when we cease to wish to form new connexions or acquire new friends. Then the departure of old ones is indeed grievous. *Our* world is gone. It is a new world rising up around us, with new customs, modes of thinking, and occupations; and leaving us to feel solitary, as it were, in a scene crowded with inhabitants. What

pangs then rend the heart, when we have to say with David, 'Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance hast Thou hid in darkness!'

But 'Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord : Yea, saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours.' From pain and doubts and fears, from sins without and sins within, they have passed to the region of peace and purity and joy. They have gained the harbour, have joined the best society, are reposing on the bosom of Jesus. Were it possible for them to hear our wishes for their return, with what aversion, we may well suppose, would they contemplate the thought? What have we to offer that could bribe them to quit the beatific vision, to fling away their unbounded prospects, their ecstatic transports? No; rather might they beckon to us, and say, 'Come up hither : come and see.' And perhaps their joy may know some abatement till we be joined to them. Perhaps they without us cannot be made perfect. Let them then speak to us; let the language of inspiration receive a new force by their imagined use of it: 'Set your affections on things above; lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.'—JOHN LEIFCHILD, D.D.

XII.

HE arose to enjoy His mediatorial power in its full splendour, and in a congenial state. He received it in heaven as His *reward*; and exercises it for ever

there, before innumerable spectators and over the whole universe. All things in heaven, on earth, and under the earth, are made subject to Him. Who can tell the interest awakened in heaven among its blessed inhabitants on His arrival there in our glorified nature? Then was He fully installed in His mediatorial office. The [crown of sovereign dignity was put on] His head, and the sceptre of universal authority in His hand. Not an angel or saint, in the celestial regions, but was present at the scene, and helped to celebrate it with their adoring shouts and acclamations. From that moment to this, they have remained cheerfully subject to His disposal. . . .

There must be somewhere, a world suitable to His spiritual and glorious state, which has received and retains Him. And if He has reached it, shall not His followers? Will not God join them to Him? Whither, but to Him, should their conscious spirits ascend from the bed of death? How many of them have felt this on that bed in lively anticipation! As the spirit of the patriarch revived when he saw the chariots that were to conduct him to the presence of Joseph, in all his royal elevation and splendour,—so have theirs in the extremity of nature, with the confident hope and belief of going to be with Jesus, where He is, to behold His glory. They have felt, as it were, the touch of the angels, urging them, as they did Lot, to quit the Sodom of this world,

and to put their souls in a posture of flight towards the celestial Zoar; and, like him, they have addressed themselves to that object, without casting behind another lingering look. Such is the assured hope, the confident belief of this state of bliss, immediately after death, which the resurrection and exaltation of Christ kindle in the breasts of believers. . . .

What then is the grave to a Christian, but a quiet dormitory for his mortal body, where he shall fall into a profound slumber, during which no uneasy dreams shall occur to annoy him, and out of which he shall awake at last as out of a refreshing sleep? Fear not, O Christian! to go down to the grave under the care of Christ. He who raised up Himself will raise up thee. And not only so, but when thou art raised, this Divine Author and Finisher of thy faith will fashion thy vile body like unto His own glorious body. Like the rod of Aaron, after thou hast lain in the sanctuary of the grave for ages, thou shalt bud and blossom afresh. Like Job, after thou hast passed the gloom, captivity, and desolation of death, thy latter end shall be better than thy beginning. Like the temple of the Jews, the glory of thy latter house shall exceed the glory of the former one; and in that temple will the Lord give peace for evermore.—*Ibid.*

XIII.

SUFFERING is the beaten path to glory, and that which makes it so much the more glorious ; suffering fits us for glory, and disposes us for the reception and fruition of it ; by the cross we are fitted for the crown. The suffering members shall not only be glorified, but be conformable to their glorified Head in glory ; as they have here *suffered with Him*, they shall hereafter *be glorified together*, not with equal glory but with the same kind of glory. . . . Our glory shall be derived from Him ; His glory shall be reflected upon us, and we shall shine in His beams. . . . Heaven is the Christian's proper country ; they are born from heaven, their conversation is in heaven, their eternal habitation is there ; their Head and Husband, their friends and kindred, are there ; and it is theirs by a right of donation, by a right of purchase, by a right of possession, and by a right of conquest. . . . Oh, glorious privilege, to be brought unto this blessed society, this general assembly of the first-born ; especially if we consider what company, what society, what assembly we belong unto. . . . Lord ! what an honour is this, to know Thy people by name, and to call them by name before Thy throne, and there publicly to acknowledge them, and proclaim the good done by them ! Oh, let it be our care to get first the white garment of grace on

earth, and then we shall not miss of the white robes of glory in heaven. . . .

They *stand* before the throne, and before the Lamb, as servants attending upon their Lord, a most happy station, and as such accounted by them; not that they stand perpetually gazing upon God, and doing nothing else, but they express their love unto Him, by attending upon Him, to execute His commands.

. . . The saints' dignity in heaven is great, they are kings and priests unto God; their purity great, being purified as He is pure; their joy great, being entered into the joy of their Lord, this joy being too great to enter into them. . . . 'Many of these

saints were martyrs, that shed their blood for Christ.' But mark, their garments were made white, not in their own blood, but in the blood of the Lamb.

. . . All the saints enter heaven with palms in their hands, having conquered sin, Satan, and the world, and the whole host of spiritual enemies.

. . . Though the cross was the way to the crown, yet the cross did not merit the crown; their sufferings would not, could not, bring them to heaven, without having their souls washed in the blood of the Lamb, much less could their sufferings merit and purchase heaven; but it pleased God of His free grace thus to reward their sufferings. They were *washed in the blood of the Lamb*, whose blood paid the price of their salvation. . . . Oh, happy place and state! which will at once cause the saints to forget all for-

mer sorrows for time past, and happily prevent any further cause of affliction and sorrow for time to come; where no sin shall afflict them, no sorrow affect them, no danger affright them, where all tears shall be wiped from their eyes, all sorrows banished from their hearts, and everlasting joys shall possess their souls; where they shall obey their God with vigour, praise Him with cheerfulness, love Him above measure, fear Him without torment, trust Him without despondency, serve Him without lassitude and weariness, without interruption or distraction, being perfectly like unto God, as well in holiness as in happiness, as well in purity as in immortality.

. . . Their works follow them; a delightful remembrance of their good works is found with them, which if it refreshes their souls with transporting pleasures now, how will it swallow them up with the highest transports of complacency and delight then? . . . No need of any temple there for external worship and ordinances which it is our duty to wait upon God in here. . . . What need of the natural light of the sun and moon, where the Sun of Righteousness for ever shineth, and where God is all in all? *The gates shall not be shut at all by day*, and there is no night to shut them in; the gates shall be open to show their peaceable state and secure tranquillity. . . . We cannot suppose that in the heavenly state there will be any want either of meat or medicines, any hunger that shall require

food, or any sickness to stand in need of physic ; but as food and physic are the instrumental means of the preservation of natural life, without which it will certainly and suddenly decay ; in like manner our Lord Jesus Christ doth not only give spiritual life unto His people, but He is the conserving cause of it, He doth maintain, and will preserve it, without the least decay, to all eternity : thus are *the leaves of this tree for the healing of the nation.* . . . *They shall see God's face*, which imparts fruition as well as vision of Him, together with a sweet and satisfactory delectation in Him. . . . They are thankful for imperfect lineaments here, but shall be satisfied with His likeness then and there. . . . The happy day is coming when there shall be no night, but an eternal Sabbath of rest, light and life, with plenty of all good things, even *fulness of joy, and rivers of pleasure for evermore.*—WILLIAM BURKITT, M.A.

XIV.

WITH the new element of humanity in His being, added to His Divine nature, He asks that He may rise and be enthroned in glory, ascend to the same position of majesty as He occupied with God from eternity. As relating to our nature, this was indeed a marvellous request. He does not think of laying aside that nature now that He has finished the work which had been assigned to Him in it, but that He may take it with Him to the throne which He had

occupied with the Father in heaven. What a stimulating truth is this for us ! And with what a dignity does it invest our nature ! In human society we wish our friends to be welcomed where we ourselves are well received. This is a part of social honour claimed and prized. Now the Son of God had humbled Himself, had laid His glory by, that He might become personally and sympathetically acquainted with our nature, and by assuming it save it from eternal and irretrievable ruin ; and having done the work on earth which this enterprise devolved on Him, His love to humanity was so strong that He would not return to heaven without having our nature united still to His own. He wished it to be welcomed in the region and amid the glory from which He had descended.—
JAMES SPENCE, M.A., D.D.

XV.

IF losses and poverty attend us in this world, we are going where all the riches of heaven are to be enjoyed. A throne and a kingdom are prepared for us, and being faithful unto death, we shall receive the crown of life. Every want will be removed, every wish fulfilled, and every desire granted ; for ‘he that overcometh shall inherit all things ;’ he shall possess the riches of heaven to the full extent of his most enlarged desires ; and the Lord says concerning him, ‘I will be his God ;’ I will be to him a source of complete and everlasting blessedness ;

‘and he shall be My son,’ to inherit My kingdom, and dwell with Me in it through eternal ages. If we groan in this tabernacle under a load of bodily afflictions, we are going to that land where the inhabitants shall nevermore say, ‘I am sick.’ Mark yon poor cottager; his dwelling is mean, and ready to fall. The windows are shattered, the roof is broken, and in the walls are many chinks and openings; you pity him, and tell him that his house is sorely out of repair; he answers, with composure, ‘I know it is so, but that gives me little concern; for I am going to flit: I shall soon remove into a most comfortable and commodious dwelling, which my kind benefactor, as an act of unmerited love, has built, furnished, and prepared for me. I shall therefore joyfully quit this crazy abode in which I suffer many inconveniences.’ Apply this to the afflicted Christian. His body is enfeebled, shattered, and broken by disease, but he knows he is going to leave it, and this expectation supports and relieves him, ‘We know that when the earthly house of this tabernacle is dissolved, we have’ a better to go to, ‘a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.’ With this consideration our blessed Redeemer comforts the hearts of His followers: ‘Let not your heart be troubled:’—look forward to the heavenly world; ‘in My Father’s house’ from whence I came, and whither I am going, ‘there are many mansions,’ where there will be everything to accommodate you in the most delight-

ful manner. 'If it were not so, I would have told you,' and not permitted you to impose on yourselves by an airy dream. I am now going, not only to receive My own reward, but to 'prepare a place for you,' and to dispose everything for your most honourable reception into that world of glory and felicity.—JOHN FAWCETT, D.D.

XVI.

WALK in the sight of heaven. Children of the light are the 'children of the kingdom,' heirs of heaven and glory, begotten again to an inheritance, etc. And that is one reason why they are called children of light, because they are heirs of the inheritance of the saints in light. If they walk like themselves, they walk as travelling towards their own country, and going to take possession of their inheritance and portion in another land, another world, and to look upon this world as a strange country, and upon themselves in it as strangers and pilgrims; upon their habitations, as inns and lodgings in a journey; upon their enjoyments, as the accommodations of an inn, in which they are to rest as it were but for a night, and to leave all as it were the next morning; and upon what they meet with in their way, whether pleasing or displeasing, as things wherein they are little concerned, being in a journey, passing from them, and hastening homewards: all the occurrences of this life

being but as the passages of one day, compared with that eternity which is in their eye.

Under such apprehensions should children of light continually walk in the world, while their minds and hearts are at home, their conversation in heaven ; their eye not upon the trifles of this life, but upon their portion and inheritance, their longings for possession of that happiness, those riches, those joys, that glory which shall be revealed. The view of this at a distance, their thoughts of it, does quicken, comfort, encourage them, put spirits and life into them, in all their actings for God and motions towards Him, or sufferings for His name's sake. This fortifies them against all the terrors and all the allurements of the world. . . .

What are the riches and treasures of the world but loss and dung, compared with those riches of glory, the treasures of our Father's kingdom ?

What are the delights of sense, and pleasures of the world, but drops of mud ? Drops, compared with those rivers of pleasures which are at God's right hand ; and mud, compared with the pure river of the water of life, those pure, sinless, satisfying, enhappy-ing, everlasting delights.

What is all the honour and splendour of the world, but as the glittering of a glow-worm to the glory of the sun in its full brightness, when compared with the glorious inheritance of the saints above ?

What are the things on earth, which earthly hearts

most affect and admire, but as trifles and children's playthings, compared with things above? A sight of that country which they seek, that place they are walking to, will help them to look upon all the glory of the world with contempt and disregard; and when they walk as children of light, they walk in such a sight of it. . . .

What though all our earthly enjoyments be utterly uncertain, they may be consumed, or lost, or forced from us on a sudden, we can no way secure them a year, a week, a day to an end. Oh, but we have an inheritance; we have enjoyments and treasures above, which lie at no such uncertainties. They are reserved for us in the heavens, above the reach of rust, and moth, and water, and fire, and injustice, and violence. We look for a kingdom that cannot be shaken, 'though the earth be removed, and the mountains,' etc., which cannot be consumed, though the earth should be turned to ashes, and elements melt with fervent heat.

We are passing through a valley of tears to the joy of our Lord; through the malice and rage of men, to the enjoyment of that God who is love itself; through menaces and threatenings, to inherit the promises; through men's reproaches and hard measures, to the blessed welcomes of Christ, and His everlasting embraces.—DAVID CLARKSON, B.D.

XVII.

MAKE haste home. Make no longer stay than needs must in this strange country. Make straight steps to your feet ; disburden yourselves of worldly cares, projects, fleshly lusts, that weight that does so easily beset you. What you have to do here, do it with all your might, that you may be fit for home. Despatch, make haste ; remember whither you are going, and to whom. Your Father expects you ; the Bridegroom thinks long till you come, He that will delight in you for ever. You are but now contracted ; the marriage will not be solemnized till you come home ; and there He stands ready to entertain you, to embrace you in the arms of everlasting love. Hear how sweetly He invites you : 'Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away.' Oh, turn not aside into by-paths of sin and vanity. Look not back, close with sweet exhortation. Oh, let the sight, the thoughts, of Jesus quicken your pace. And while you are absent in the body let your hearts be at home, your hearts in heaven, where are your treasures, your joys, your crown, your glory, your inheritance, your Husband. Oh, is not here allurements enough ? This is the way to be at home while you are from home. . . .

When you are come to the gates of death, there is but one step then betwixt you and home, and that is death. Methinks we should pass this cheerfully, the next step your foot will be in heaven. How does it cheer the

weary traveller, to think this is the last day's journey ; to-morrow, to-morrow I shall be at my own home, with all my dear relations. There I shall have ease and rest, and many welcomes. Suppose this last be the worst, the most stormy day of all my journey, to-morrow will make full amends for it.—*Ibid.*

XVIII.

GOD is eternal, therefore He lives for ever to reward the godly. . . . The people of God are in a suffering condition. . . . The wicked are clad in purple, and fare deliciously, while the godly suffer. Goats climb upon high mountains, while Christ's sheep are in the valley of slaughter. But here is the comfort, God is eternal, and He has appointed eternal recompenses for the saints. In heaven are fresh delights, sweetness without surfeit ; and that which is the crown and zenith of heaven's happiness, is, that it is 'eternal.' Were there but the least suspicion that this glory must cease it would much eclipse, yea embitter it ; but it is eternal. What angel can span eternity ? 'An eternal weight of glory.' The saints shall bathe themselves in the rivers of Divine pleasure ; and these rivers can never be dried up. 'At Thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.' This is the Elah, the highest strain in the apostle's rhetoric. 'Ever with the Lord.' There is peace without trouble, ease without pain, glory without end, 'ever with the Lord.' Let this comfort the saints in all

their troubles ; their sufferings are but short, but their reward is eternal. Eternity makes heaven to be heaven ; it is the diamond in the ring. Oh, blessed day that shall have no night ! The sun-light of glory shall rise upon the soul and never set ! Oh, blessed spring, that shall have no autumn, or fall of the leaf ! The Roman emperors have three crowns set upon their heads, the first of iron, the second of silver, the third of gold ; so the Lord sets three crowns on His children, grace, comfort, and glory ; and this crown is eternal. ‘Ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.’—THOMAS WATSON.

XIX.

WE shall have an immediate communion with God Himself, who is the inexhaustible sea of all happiness. This divines call ‘the beatific vision.’ The Psalmist triumphed in the enjoyment he had of God in this life. ‘Whom have I in heaven but Thee?’ If God enjoyed by faith, gives so much comfort to the soul, how much more when He is enjoyed by immediate vision ! Here we see God darkly through the glass of ordinances ; but in the kingdom of heaven we shall see Him ‘face to face.’ We shall have an intellectual sight of Him ; we shall see Him with the eyes of our mind ; we shall know Him as much as the angels in heaven do. ‘We shall know as we are known.’ We shall have a full knowledge of God, though not know Him fully ; as a vessel in the sea is full of the

sea, though it holds not all the sea. To see and enjoy God will be most delicious ; in Him are beams of majesty, and bowels of mercy. God has all excellencies concentrated in Him. . . . If one flower should have the sweetness of all flowers, how sweet would that flower be ! All the beauty and sweetness which lies scattered in the creature is infinitely to be found in God. To see and enjoy Him, therefore, will ravish the soul with delight. We shall see God so as to love Him, and be made sensible of His love ; and when we shall have this sweet communion with Him, He shall be 'all in all ;' light to the eye, manna to the taste, and music to the ear. . . .

In the kingdom of heaven we shall have sweet society with glorified saints. Oh ! what a blessed time will it be when those who have prayed, wept, and suffered together, shall rejoice together ! We shall see the saints in their white linen of purity, and see them as so many crowned kings : in beholding the glorified saints, we shall behold a heaven full of suns. Some have asked whether we shall know one another in heaven ? Surely our knowledge will not be diminished, but increased. The judgment of Luther and Anselm, and many other divines is, that we shall know one another ; yea, the saints of all ages, whose faces we never saw ; and, when we shall see the saints in glory without their infirmities of pride and passion, it will be a glorious sight. We see how Peter was transported when he saw but two prophets in the

transfiguration ; but what a blessed sight will it be when we shall see the whole glorious company of prophets, and martyrs, and holy men of God ! How sweet will the music be when all shall sing together in concert in the heavenly choir ! And though, in this great assembly of saints and angels, 'one star may differ from another in glory,' yet no such weed as envy shall ever grow in the paradise of God ; there shall be perfect love, which as it casts out fear so also envy. Though one vessel of glory may hold more than another, every vessel will be full. . . .

When the saints' union with Christ is perfected in heaven, their joy shall be full. All the birds of the heavenly paradise sing for joy. What joy, when the saints shall see the great gulf shot, and know that they are passed from death to life ! What joy, when they are as holy as they would be, and as God would have them to be ! What joy to hear the music of angels ; to see the golden banner of Christ's love displayed over the soul ; to be drinking that water of life which is sweeter than all nectar and ambrosia ! What joy when the saints shall see Christ clothed in their flesh, sitting in glory above the angels ! Then they shall 'enter into the joy of their Lord.' Here joy enters into the saints ; in heaven 'they enter into joy.' O thou saint of God, who now hangest thy harp upon the willows, and minglest thy drink with weeping, in the kingdom of heaven thy water shall

be turned into wine ; thou shalt have so much felicity that thy soul cannot wish for more. The sea is not so full of water as the heart of a glorified saint is of joy.—*Ibid.*

XX.

WE cannot conceive ‘what God hath prepared in heaven for those who love Him.’ Even here, in the realization of all that Christ is to His people, we may—we ought—to rejoice ‘with joy unspeakable and full of glory ;’ but the highest experience of this joy is but a foretaste of the joy that is the everlasting portion of the redeemed. Who can ‘paint the moment after death ?’

Our knowledge of that state is small ;
The eye of faith is dim :
But ’tis enough that Christ knows all,
And we shall be with Him !

Oh! sweet comfort to the Christian mourner, weeping, as Christ wept, by the grave of buried love—of friendship interred ! The dead who sleep in Jesus are ‘not lost, but gone before :’ the treasure is in heaven. The grave is but the shadow—the gate of life is the reality. ‘We see Jesus’ at the tomb. ‘We see Jesus ;’ Jesus, who died for our loved ones ; Jesus, who was dear to them as poor guilty sinners who felt their spiritual need, and beheld their interest in His atoning blood ; Jesus, who gave them of His Spirit, and wrought all their works in them, so that they were His ‘epistles’ on earth, speak-

ing for Him, living for Him ; though in themselves but 'earthen vessels,' ever lamenting their own unworthiness. 'We see Jesus,'—and we see our loved ones 'with Jesus, where He is.' And we no longer 'see death.'

Believing mourner! raise those tear-blind eyes. The sunlight of the Divine revelations of future bliss illumines the dark passage of mortality through which the heirs of immortality pass to their sinless home. Think not they are called too early. 'I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write, From henceforth blessed are the dead which die in the Lord : Even so, saith the Spirit ; for they rest from their labours.' Harken to the sweet tones of that heavenly voice falling softly and soothingly upon the listening ear : contemplate the unutterable bliss of heaven ; and, in the hour of bereavement, whilst the riven heart is bleeding, God will help you to say with the Psalmist,—'I WAS DUMB.'—*'Heart Cheer for Heart Sorrow.'* By CHARLES BULLOCK, B.D.

XXI.

THE state of the immortal spirit, in the interval betwixt death and the resurrection, when the body in which it was enshrined lies mouldering in the grave, is one on which much darkness and uncertainty rest. We cannot form any conception of what may be the feelings and exercises of a disembodied spirit ; nor do the Scriptures afford reason much aid in the con-

*The human
mediated
state*

templation. They assure us, however, of enough to dismiss or prevent all anxiety about such of our friends as have died in the faith. They represent them as having fallen asleep in Christ; as having entered into a state of rest; as being present with the Lord; kept by Him free from all sin and sorrow, to be produced by Him on the day of resurrection, and invested with the full glory of His salvation. To think of them as being already as glorious as they shall ever be, is an unscriptural imagination. 'All these,' says the apostle, speaking of the ancient saints, 'having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promises, God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.' It is in a body, and not one by one, that the saints shall be put in possession of that kingdom in which they shall reign; so that all preceding generations of the faithful are waiting on the present, as they in their turn may have to wait on generations which shall follow, before they attain to what is eminently promised as the saints' reward.

But though it is unscriptural to imagine that our deceased Christian friends are yet made perfect in glory, it would be still more unscriptural to imagine that they could, at any future time, be more exempt from sin and suffering than they are at the present moment. There is no other direction, perhaps, in which the hatefulness of Popery exhibits itself more conspicuously than it does in this. Their doctrine of

Purgatory, the invention of the foulest avarice, at once speaks peace to the wicked, and trouble to the saint—where there is any saint so befooled as to believe it. In the very lowest degree of comfort, then, the meditation on the state of our deceased Christian friends, is one of satisfaction. What would any of us, who are of prudent and reflective minds, refuse to part with, that we might gain a state in which sin and anxiety, grief and pain, would no more distress us, having a prospect beyond of felicity and glory? But, when to this consideration of the absence of all sorrow, we add that of our friends being *conscious* that they are in the Lord's keeping—feeling the warmth of His cherishing, and exercising a lively faith, obscured and interrupted by no cloud of doubt, in expectation of their enlargement into the full-orbed glory of the resurrection—how is it that the Christian should ever shed a tear over the decease of his Christian friend? It must surely be for himself he weeps, as left behind without sympathy and help to struggle with a world of temptation and wretchedness: it cannot be for the friend who has escaped before him into the land of safety.—WILLIAM ANDERSON, LL.D., in *'Re-union in the Heavenly Kingdom,' etc.*

XXII.

Children in

NOW turn to the consideration of the case of such as die in infancy. These form by far the greatest proportion of redeemed spirits. And when the heart of

the Christian is ready to fail within him for grief, when among adult men and women he can discover so little which will reward the Redeemer for the travail of His soul, how reviving it is to look upward, and contemplate the innumerable multitude of those who were rescued in infancy from the corrupting power of the world, and safely secured for Himself in His heavenly pavilion ! it is astonishing, on the one hand, that there should be found so many who have dark misgivings of heart on the subject of the salvation of these infants ; and, on the other, that among those who do not question it, so little account should be taken of them in estimating the glory of the kingdom—despising these little ones, and scarcely reckoning them in the number of the saved : whereas it would be a less improper way of calculation to say that the kingdom belongs to children, and that the adults who are saved are a few who are admitted to a share of their inheritance. . . .

O happy children, ye who were laid hold of by the Redeemer and appropriated to Himself, before ye could apostatize like your wretched brothers and unhappy sisters, who have broken the household covenant, and abjured the family's Saviour ! Then said I, to the father and mother as they wept, Your children who have died are a better portion to you than those who live : weep for the living, and not for the dead : it is the living you have lost ; the dead are safely kept for you. When believing parents

made their way so earnestly through the obstructing disciples, to place their children before the Redeemer that He might bless them, what otherwise was His reception of them worth, yea, what did it mean, when 'He was much displeased' with His disciples, 'and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God;' and then 'took them up in His arms, put His hands on them, and blessed them'? If any of these children had presently died,—and there can be little doubt that some of them did die in childhood,—how vain it had been for them to be blessed by the Redeemer, if there be no heavenly inheritance for those who die in early years!

It is most injurious, however, to the cause of infants, to plead it on ground so low as this. Instead of merely vindicating their admission, and some consideration for them, I regard them as being generally the best welcomed spirits which pass into the eternal world. The whole of our Lord's treatment of them is calculated to produce this impression. Besides, contemplating the subject in the light of reason, is not the intellectual and moral structure, I ask, of an infant's spirit the same as that of a full-grown man's? And who shall dispute, that some of the brightest geniuses, and most amiable hearts of our race, may have been withdrawn,—in the love and valuation of them withdrawn,—after a short time's breathing of

the pestilential air of this earth, yea, before a breath of it was inhaled, to be secured and nursed in the Paradise of God? As I think of it, I become the more persuaded, that this securing of many of the best by early death, may be a principle of the Divine administration.

It is true they passed away without having acquired any of this world's learning ; but, irrespectively of God's standard of measurement being a moral one, how insignificant, I appeal, will not even Newton's science appear in yonder temple of light ! Will the infant spirit have any sense of inferiority from the want of it ? Will it appear disrespectful from the want of it in the estimation of the Eternal One ? It is true, again, that they passed away without any prayers in which their infant knees had bowed ; and without any psalms of praise which their infant lips had sung ; but what, brethren, I again appeal, is the chief characteristic of a religious life in this world ? Is it not to have our hearts brought back to their infant state ; to have them cleansed of these pollutions, and divested of these perverse habits which we have contracted since we were like these children, who were early withdrawn from the corrupt influences to which we have been exposed ? Accordingly, Christ's great lesson for us is, 'Learn to be like a child.' . . . If there are a few deeds of charity of the performance of which we can speak for ourselves, oh ! is it not all more than counterbalanced,

when these infants can plead in reply, that they were guilty of no envious thoughts, no bitter or slanderous speeches, no impure imaginations or devices, no fretfulness against the providence of God—of nothing at all which can be charged against them as either a dereliction or transgression of duty? Who of us shall presume to compare himself with an infant, or forbid that its spirit go to the Saviour of its pious father or the Saviour of its pious mother? . . .

With regard to those children dying in infancy who are the offspring of ungodly parents—equally of such do I believe that they shall be saved; though not with a salvation so glorious as that of the offspring of the saints. It is not by any means for the relief of the anxiety of those wicked parents that I express myself thus confidently about the salvation of their children; but for magnifying the grace of God, and rejoicing the hearts of the saints on the subject of the magnificence of the Redeemer's kingdom, and the splendour of His reward.—*Ibid.*

XXIII.

How different in character will be the meeting after the resurrection! when that grave, feared as a destroyer, shall be demonstrated, as made of Christ, the regenerator of our friends—rendering back in incorruption that which it received in corruption, in glory that which it received in dishonour, in power that which it received in weakness, a spiritual body,

fit as a tabernacle for the glorified soul, that which it received a natural body, an impediment to its exercises. Hosannah to the Lord of resurrection, for this blessed hope! Yea, so overwhelming is its glory that it is like to obscure our faith. How shall the mother recognise her son, who departed from her an emaciated infant, in yonder angelic form in the vigour and brilliancy of resurrection manhood? And how shall the father, who wept bitter tears in secret over his daughter's decrepitude, distinguish her in yonder seraph of celestial grace? What mean you, friends? You surely cannot wish to meet your children in that plight of wretchedness in which you bade them farewell, so that unassisted you could of yourself recognise them. The Lord will provide; but methinks it will probably be a busy day for those good angels who ministered to us on earth, finding us out for one another and introducing us. Remembering how they had seen us grieve for one another, how sympathetically they will enjoy the scene, as we stand amazed for awhile at one another's glory before we embrace! . . .

Of the fellowship in immortality . . . I remark, . . . that to a great extent it shall be of a family nature. At least, I hope it will. It is at home the pleasures are sweetest by which we are attracted to one another, and the dangers most threatening which make us press to one another's sides. Its loves descend deepest into our natures,

and take the widest possession of them. I speak, of course, of the home of piety ; for the inmates of it alone are concerned in the communion of the Paradise of God. . . . How abhorrent it is to a well-ordered mind, to suppose that there shall ever come a time when a man shall be so divested of some of the principal ornaments of earthly virtue, that he shall look on the person who, in the first scenes of his existence, was his father or mother, his brother or sister, his spouse or his child, with no feeling warmer than that with which he looks on any one who was entirely a stranger ! No, brethren, the fifth commandment, with all the domestic virtues in its train, shall follow us into the kingdom, and continue a part of its holy and lovely administrations.

I would willingly indulge my imagination here, but must content myself with selecting a very few cases for contemplation. How many parents there are, who have almost entirely forgotten those of their children who died in infancy ; and who, being inquired at about the number of their family, will, so unlike that sweet faithful child who so resolutely maintained 'We are seven,' give account only of those who live—the least worthy of being reckoned. Faithless father and mother that you are ! Amid all your rapture, how ashamed you will be of your forgetfulness, when those neglected ones are restored to you, so beautiful and glorious ; and especially when, under that angel-guidance, they hasten with

such excitement to meet with those of whom they are told, that under the Creator they were the authors of their existence! Nor will it be with little excitement that they hasten to meet you, their brothers and sisters, with whom they may associate and worship, as being more of their own nature than any others to be found in all the kingdom. The whole of you,—brothers and sisters, as well as parents,—meditate on them; the thought is most sanctifying; it endears the Redeemer with peculiar attraction to a tender heart; and, remember, there are no hearts great which are not tender.—*Ibid.*

XXIV.

‘THEY have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.’ Earth furnished no means of purification; neither its wisdom, nor its art, nor its goodness, nor its culture, nor its refinement, nor yet the discipline of its toils and trials, by itself. The means of cleansing had to come down from heaven. Divine mercy provided this in the atoning blood of the Lamb. In this they washed; renouncing all confidence in themselves for pardon or holiness, they washed and were clean. ‘Therefore are they before the throne of God,’ pardoned and accepted in the beloved; the blood of Christ the ladder by which they have mounted up so high; because, as it gave them a title to a place there, and produced in them a meetness for it, procuring for

them grace to overcome in the warfare against sin, God would not leave them, His forgiven and purified children, in any lower place. 'Come up hither,' He said to each one of them; and so they are there, not one a-missing; each one wearing his robe of white, and bearing the victor's palm.

How blessed their employment, how complete their happiness! 'They shall serve Him day and night in His temple.' They had learned to serve Him in this world; it had become their delight to do so. But while here, their service was at a distance from His presence and His seat: there, it shall be in His heavenly temple, amid the light and joy of His manifested presence and glory, for that is the temple there. Here they had many interruptions, from worldly cares, temptations, and trials; and when these were fewest, from their own weakness and weariness, and other fettering conditions of this mortal life; even when their service reached the loftiest strain, nature demanded repose to recruit its energies at the close of every day. There, they shall have their heart's desire and delight to the full, and with their immortal powers serve Him without interruption or weariness, with unremitting, ceaseless activity and alacrity, 'day and night in His temple.' 'And He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them;'—amid these glowing hearts, ever burning with the ardour of the seraphim, God's home shall be; nearer to Him than the angels that never

fell, because dearer, being bought by the blood of His Son, they shall form His dwelling-place, as the nation of Israel did once here below. Instead of presenting themselves before His throne merely to make their acknowledgments and pay their homage there on being admitted into heaven, and then being remanded to some remote settlement in the celestial country, visited only by the distant rays of the Divine goodness and love,—they are favoured, privileged ones. He that sits on the throne is God in Christ, their Father; and they are His children in the Son; and therefore they shall form His family, His home, even in heaven, while bright angels that excel in strength are His attendants and ministering servants. And this will be no barren privilege or empty honour. It will procure for them all blessings of the highest kind, straight from the great fountain of all good. They suffered here like others, and in some cases more than others, from privation, hardship, calamity, and affliction; from common trials, from special ones, from the judgments of God, from the persecutions of men; and if outward peace, prosperity, and abundance prevailed, their soul often languished for want of spiritual nourishment, refreshment, and consolation, and their heart knew its own plague and bitterness. But all that will be at an end in heaven, exchanged for never-ending satisfaction, refreshment, and joy. And not one shall want. We have read of large cities, some of the greatest and finest in the

world, not having enough for the sustenance of their inhabitants when their numbers were increased by additions from without, so that many were starving amidst all the splendour. But there will be nothing of that kind in the celestial city, though the crowds which pour into its streets are a multitude that no man can number ; there is enough and to spare for all in the great Father's house.—ALEX. GREGORY, M.A., in *'Discourses on the Book of the Revelation.'*

XXV.

LET us look at the conquerors standing on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. To stand on the sea is not the privilege of mortals ; we may sink, swim, or sail in the sea, but we cannot stand on it. Only one who lived in this world ever did that,—the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God in human form. True, His friend and disciple Peter once had the benefit of his Master's upholding power, when, with a mixture of faith and presumption, he ventured to walk from his boat across a few feet of water to Jesus : but it was only for a moment. For one instant, the sustaining power of Christ was extended to honour the little faith which he had ; the next instant it was withdrawn to rebuke his presumption. To stand on the sea of glass does not belong to the earthly state ; it belongs only to the heavenly one. There the redeemed do so ; in Christ they do it.

Their place, their position, is supernatural. It is not of themselves, nor by any power of nature, that they are there ; they stand on that sea only by Divine, Almighty power, by Omnipotent grace—the grace of the Saviour. In Christ they stand on the sea, as He did, being upheld by His power there for ever. Once they were in the sea, passing through it, in the midst of its waters ; but now they are so no more. All that is past ; and their past experience lifts them above its possible recurrence. Once that sea was a devouring gulf, with raging winds and waves, and storms threatening to swallow them up ; now it is a crystal sea, motionless and tideless, waveless and stormless to them ; peaceful and tranquil,—yea, not only calm and smooth, but a firm, solid pavement under their feet, on which they can stand secure. For that sea of glass represents their past experience, or rather God's gracious dealings with them,—in short, their redemption from guilt, and sin, and death, and all evil ; and it is that which has brought them there : on that they stand, and by that they are upheld before the throne.

Yes ; it is not to their native innocence, nor on any pedestal of their own merits, not on God's goodness in creation or in common providence, that they stand ; but on that work of Divine mercy and power which has brought them through the depths. To Christ's redeeming work, to His agony, His cross, and to the fiery baptism of His Spirit, to the deep waters of

correction and spiritual trouble,—‘the sea of glass mingled with fire,’—to that they owe their place, and on that they stand for ever :

‘Once sunk low, now mounted high
Through the dear might of Him that walked the waves.’

To Christ’s work of atonement and obedience for them, and to God’s work of grace in them, they owe their being there ; and as it has brought them there, it will keep them there : their redemption is an eternal redemption. Christ’s redemption-work is the flooring of their heaven. The sea of glass is the pavement under their feet. If that were not there, they could not stand there. If that gave way, they would disappear from heaven. But this cannot be, as that redemption-work for them and in them is an accomplished work ; and it will uphold them for ever. And never shall anything else but that uphold them. All the services and praises which they shall render to God through eternity will never put anything else under their feet to support them, will never displace that, or give them anything else to stand on ; no, nor lay anything above that sea of glass, add anything to it, or put anything between it and the soles of their feet ; but these shall ever press that bare, naked surface. And they shall never wish it otherwise. Fitting it is that in that state where its perfect and glorious results are seen, redemption should be represented by that sea of glass mingled

with fire, reflecting the throne and Him who sits on it, and the lamps of fire burning before it,—gleaming with redemption glories, emblematic of the purity, brightness, holiness, and glory of the heavenly state of the redeemed, and of the Divine perfections which now shine so brightly in them as God's complete and finished workmanship; for they have gotten the victory; and perfect holiness, a heavenly brightness, and a Divine glory are theirs now.

They stand on the sea of glass 'having the harps of God,' harps of no human workmanship, and tuned to no earthly melody, and devoted to no creature's praise; and with these they sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb,—that is, the song of deliverance, divinely wrought deliverance, like that celebrated on the banks of the Red Sea: 'Sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously. The Lord is my strength and song, and He is become my salvation.' In that respect it is the song of Moses; but it is also the song of the Lamb; for not Moses, but the Lamb, is the Captain and Leader of this salvation, by His own blood turning aside the sword of the destroyer, and opening a door of escape from bondage, condemnation, and wrath; going before them too, taking them by the hand, and leading them through the depths out of the spiritual Egypt, destroying all their enemies, and making them more than conquerors in His great love to them. Therefore there are none in that company of victors who

do not ascribe all the glory of their salvation to God and to the Lamb, and cast their crowns before the throne.—*Ibid.*

XXVI.

‘THE nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it; and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour unto it.’ Some think that, as this is said in connection with the ever-open gates, the heavenly Jerusalem will be like the earthly one in its being the capital of a country, and the source of light to the world; that, vast as it is, the city proper will contain only the highest, the priestly and royal class of the redeemed; and that all the rest, here called the nations of the saved, will dwell in countless multitudes around; and, headed by their kings, will be ever coming thronging in at the gates with their offerings; as if the twofold representation of the seventh chapter,—the hundred and forty and four thousand of Israel, and the numberless multitude of all nations,—were to be kept up in heaven, only the position of the two being almost reversed. But there is nothing to warrant such a distinction among the redeemed in glory. There will be ranks and orders in heaven; all perfect indeed, yet degrees of excellence, of grace, and of gifts among them, and so of station and honour, as one star differeth from another star in glory. But there will be ‘no more strangers and foreigners;’ all will be ‘fellow-citizens

with the saints and of the household of God ;' all one body, one blessed company ; one family, as one Father ; one flock and one fold, as one Shepherd. The 'nations of the saved' are the inhabitants of the city ; they 'walk in the light of it.' They are the great multitude whom no man can number—of all nations, peoples, tribes, and tongues, who stand before the very throne of God ; and they and their kings dwell there as God's worshippers and servants, bringing whatever glory and honour belonged to them to swell the tribute of their homage and praise ; the humbler glories of earth blending with the higher glories of heaven. . . .

As Eden had its rivers, so John sees a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb, like that sacred river, in Ezekiel's visionary city, which came out of the sanctuary, and whose healing waters made everything live wherever they came. It flows from the great Fountain of life opened by the atonement of Christ ; it is the stream of Divine love and grace, of holiness, life, and joy, ever pure and bright, fresh, life-giving, and healthful. It is the river of life, the river of God's pleasures, the river that maketh glad the city of God, flowing through the midst of its streets, and bringing health and gladness everywhere. Another feature of Eden was the tree of life ; and this appears in John's vision. There was but one tree of life in that garden ; but here the one tree is multiplied

myriads of times; for it appears planted, like the trees in Ezekiel's vision, all along the sides of the living streams which run through the middle of the streets—'by the banks of the river, on this side and on that,'—giving shade, beauty, and freshness to the streets, and bringing its blessed virtues within reach of all the inhabitants, in its leaves and fruit, the food and medicine of immortality. For this is no earthly tree; even the tree of life in the midst of the garden was but a shadow of it. The trees of this world bear but one kind of fruit, and that only once a year; this tree bears twelve, and yields fruit every month, never fading all the year round; while the very leaves are for the healing of the nations. What is this but Christ, in the healing, life-giving, soul-nourishing virtues of His atoning blood and sanctifying grace?—Christ, the ever-living One, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever, from whom, as when He was on earth, healing virtue flows on every side to all around Him, and will flow for ever. This is more than Paradise regained; it is Eden, that place of loveliness and bliss, of innocence, purity, and fellowship with God, a heaven below, exalted, glorified, and made unfading and eternal.

These are some of the images of glory and happiness, of splendour and beauty, by which this book sets forth the felicity of the redeemed in heaven. They are at best but poor, imperfect images; yet the devout mind is glad and thankful to have them, to

help it to figure to itself what it strives in vain to conceive or express. They tell us that the preciousness, brilliancy, splendour, and beauty, which our minds are trained to perceive in earthly things, will be continued in higher forms which will be perceptible to the refined senses of the spiritual body in that world where 'everything bright will be at its brightest.' Still they are chiefly images, and by no means vague and meaningless ones, far less mystical or misleading. Clear and distinct statements of Scripture give them a glorious meaning. We might wish for more of these. This was not Paul's feeling. He was content with this—'to be with Christ;' he could take that for the whole of his heaven, without anything more. But the Bible does give more; or, rather, it tells us what is implied in that which was the sum of Paul's desires; we shall be like Christ; we shall see Him as He is,—see His glory, and share it.—*Ibid.*

XXVII.

WE have gazed often on one of the grandest sights the eyes of mortals can behold, the magnificent cloud scenery of the evening sky, gazed till we have been constrained to say, Not so grand in their appearance are the everlasting hills as these moving clouds. Conceive, then, of clouds of unearthly sublimity, rolling, not flying clouds, where the brightness and the blackness, and the thunder and lightning, and the

softness of the rainbow are blended, and see through the rents of the moving mass, now and then just apparent for a moment, a throne, and One sitting on it, glowing with the colours of the jasper and the ruby. Such, I conceive, was the vision presented to the entranced apostle. A vision of revelation certainly, but yet a vision which might have led him to say with one of old, 'It is the glory of God to conceal a thing.' . . .

Daniel, perplexed by the vision he saw, sought for the meaning, and heard a voice saying, 'Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision.' While the same prophet was offering the most remarkably extended intercessory prayer, save one, which the Bible records, Gabriel was caused to fly swiftly to give the interceding prophet skill and understanding. The same spirit was commanded to appear to Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist: 'I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God, and am sent to show thee these glad tidings.' And the same angel was it that said to Mary, 'Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.' In such revealed facts have we possibly the right clue to the significance of the phrase, 'seven spirits of God.' The wonders of the spiritual world are almost wholly concealed from us. And when we meet with a phrase like the one before us, let us beware of overweening confidence as to the import. Let it quicken hallowed curiosity about

those things invisible, into which all contemplative Christians desire to look, let it also induce us to fall back with joyful assurance on the promise that the light of the future state shall render plain what is here but dimly revealed. Ye saints of God, often in this world you sing,

‘’Tis gloom and darkness here, ’tis light and joy above.’

Here you walk by the comparatively dim light of faith; and blessed, with all its imperfections, is that light. By its aid you come now to the innumerable company of angels, and to God the Judge of all, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant. Yet a little while, and you shall pass through the opened door, not in vision as John did, but in person; see far more than he saw, and know even as you are known.—WILLIAM ROBINSON, in *‘Expositions of the Book of Revelation.’*

XXVIII.

LET us note that the perfection of this blessedness will be found in the natural and spontaneous rise within us of all that is excellent and lovely. A free flow of unforced and native feeling belongs to the very idea of childhood. The young life is spontaneous in all its movements, following out at once every impulse and desire. Manhood brings self-control, much needed in a nature and a world like ours, where evil holds such empire both within and around us. We

must recognise the stern call of duty, and master the hard lesson of yielding our own inclinations to the demands of the law. We learn to act and live by rule, and in doing so find urgent need of resolution, firmly made and unflinchingly carried out. Such virtue has its meed of praise, but it should lead up to that freer, nobler life, in which effort and resolve are required no longer. We reach the blessed goal, when every impulse stirs and moves harmoniously in tune with the nature and the will of God. In heaven, the obedience of the angels is the ready outflow of their holiness and love. Their movements are ever in accord with the wish of Him who sits upon the throne. As we approach nearer towards that blissful realm, the conflict and struggle of our better being should, through confirmed and oft-repeated victory, attain to larger measure of that tranquil force, and calm and swift fulfilment. The days of battle must be numbered, and the tasks of toil accomplished. The better nature must so fill and occupy the soul that the name of duty shall be changed into delight, and the voice of law be transformed into the sweet promptings of undying love. No gift of manhood shall be lost, but reach its ripest consummation through the renewal of childlike graces. Strength and knowledge, courage and patience, shall suffer no abatement, but become more perfect and more winsome through those added charms. The saint who is fast growing ripe for heaven escapes from the

miserable drudgery and turmoil of the world, and is thus made like the little child who has not yet been bound with fetters of brass and sent to grind in the prison-house. Like the child, he lives in a happy world of his own, but lit up with a fairer sunlight, and occupied with nobler tenants. The beams shine on him of a better land, into which he shall soon be born. Manfully has he fought his battles as he toiled along his pilgrim way. Many a sore buffeting has he endured, and many a fierce foe has he put to flight. But the land of Beulah has been reached, and nothing remains for him but in the appointed hour to cross the cold stream that parts him from the celestial city. His day has cooled down from its burning noon to such a tender light as ushered in the dawn, but mingled with a calm, bright radiance that flows from a happier world. Now twice a child, by nature and by grace, he waits in peaceful confidence for the fruition of the promised blessing, 'for of such is the kingdom of heaven.'

In children, then, are we ever surrounded with the best of living parables, rising far beyond the teaching, excellent though it be, daily repeated to careworn men by the songsters of the air and flowers that deck the field. Our Lord Himself was nursed at a mother's breast, and laid to sleep in the rude cradle under her watchful eye. He passed through childhood's years, growing in wisdom and in stature, and in favour with God and man. The sweet, modest,

unconscious charm of that opening springtime of our days never bloomed in lovelier lustre than in the home at Nazareth. Throughout His life of sorrows, never did He lay aside His tender fondness for the little ones. In their trustful eyes and winsome ways, children are dear remembrancers of Jesus, the children's Friend, and once Himself a child. They wear on earth a look of angel innocence.

‘And trailing clouds of glory do they come,
From God who is their home.’

—WILLIAM KENNEDY MOORE, D.D., in *‘Proverbial Sayings of our Lord.’*

XXIX.

SAD is the mistake the worldling makes when he imagines that by multiplying means, he will in like measure multiply enjoyments. Such a rule of proportion may be sound in the arithmetic of schools, but it will not work correctly in the arithmetic of life. The power of being pleased does not keep pace with the provision of ways for pleasing. We may have more, and yet enjoy it less. Still more disastrous is the mistake of making happiness, in any earthly shape, our final aim. We lose it by pursuing it. The chase is as vain as that of a dog scouring the fields in the fruitless attempt to seize the shadow of a bird, which is winging its flight across the sky. Happiness is the shadow of goodness, and can only be secured by

securing the substance. Earthly life at its very best ends in disappointment. The most successful men the world has ever seen have confessed their weariness and chagrin. When the feverish game has been played out, they have felt it was not worth the playing. Rank and riches, praise and pleasure, all the adornments and delights of life, pall at last on the sickened palate. The glory dies away that illumined the deceptive scene ; and like the glittering treasures of fairyland, the gold and gems turn into damp mould and withered leaves. The most fatal mistake of all is to make no preparation for the life to come. Did we cease to be when we cease to breathe, the worldling's lot were but a poor one : vexation here and nothingness hereafter. But it is not annihilation that awaits him, but the tribunal of an offended God and the sentence of everlasting doom. The soul that is required of him must render its trembling account, and depart into outer darkness. The death that takes place at the moment of dissolution only leads to the second and more awful death in the unseen world. But death has lost its claim on those who have found life in Christ. So spake Jesus to weeping Martha, 'Whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.' They enjoy life below in the favour and the likeness of God. The depths of their settled peace are not disturbed by the storms that vex the surface. All things, both dark and bright, minister to their welfare. They grow in grace and inward gladness

through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, till they are ripe for the change that calls them hence. As the crawling feeder on the leaf becomes encased in a guardian shell till it comes forth from its death-like sleep, a winged gem, to flit from nectared flower to flower; so the believer lays him down to his last long rest, to awake again clad in the splendours of celestial glory, to make his abode in the land of unshadowed light and unfailing strength: in that blessed world where the soil is all sanctuary and the time all Sabbath; where the year is always spring, and the day is always morning, and life is perennial youth.—*Ibid.*

XXX.

HOLY souls are here truly blessed, not perfectly; or their present blessedness is perfect only in nature and kind, not in degree. . . . The completion of this blessedness is reserved to a better state; as its being the 'end of their way,' their 'rest from their labours,' 'the reward of their work.' . . . The time of their *entrance* upon a blessed immortality, when they shall have laid down their earthly bodies is death: . . . their *consummation* therein, when they receive their bodies glorified in the general resurrection. . . . When the body falls asleep, then doth the spirit awake; and the eyelids of the morning, even of an eternal day, do now first open upon it. . . . Now is the happy season of its awaking into the heavenly

vital light of God ; the blessed morning of that long-desired day is now dawned upon it ; the cumbersome night-veil is laid aside, and the garments of salvation and immortal glory are now put on. It hath passed through the darkness and trouble of a wearisome night, and now is joy arrived with the morning. . . . Yea, and most evident it is, . . . not only that holy souls sleep not in that state of separation, but that they are awaked by it, as out of a former sleep into a much more lively and vigorous activity than they enjoyed before ; and translated into a state as much better than their former, as the tortures of a cross are more ungrateful than the pleasures of a paradise, these joys fuller of vitality than those sickly, dying faintings ; as the immediate presence and close embraces of the Lord of life are more delectable than a mournful, disconsolate absence from Him ; which the apostle therefore tells us he desired ‘as far better ;’ . . . and as a perfected, that is, a crowned triumphant spirit, that hath attained the end of its race, . . . is now in a more vivid joyous state than when, lately toiling in a tiresome way, it languished under many imperfections. And it is observable . . . that that phrase of ‘being with Christ,’ or ‘being present with Him,’ is the same which is used by the apostle (1 Thess. iv. 17), to express the state of blessedness after the resurrection : intimating plainly the sameness of the blessedness before and after. And though this phrase be also used to

signify the present enjoyment saints have of God's gracious presence in this life, which is also in nature and kind the same ; yet it is plainly used, . . . to set out to us such a degree of that blessedness, that, in comparison thereof, our present being with Christ is a not being with Him ; our presence with Him now, an absence from Him : ' While we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord,' and ' I am in a strait betwixt two, desiring to depart,'—or having a desire unto dissolution,—' and to be with Christ,' etc. How strangely mistaken and disappointed had the blessed apostle been, had his absence from the body, his dissolution, his release, set him further off from Christ, or made him less capable of converse with Him than before he was ! And how absurd would it be to say, the ' spirits of the just are perfected,' by being cast into a stupifying sleep ; yea, or being put into any state not better than they were in before. But their state is evidently far better. The body of death is now laid aside, and the weights of sin that did so easily beset are shaken off ; flesh and sin are laid down together ; the soul is rid of its burthensome bands and shackles, hath quitted its filthy darksome prison, the usual place of laziness and sloth ; is come forth of its drowsy dormitory, and the glory of God is risen upon it. It is now come into the world of realities, where things appear as they are ; no longer in a dream or vision of the night. The vital, quickening beams of Divine light are dart-

ing in upon it on every side, and turning it into their own likeness. The shadows of evening are vanished, and fled away. It converses with no other objects but what are full themselves, and most apt to replenish it with energy and life. This cannot be but a joyful awaking, a blessed season of satisfaction and delight indeed, to the enlightened revived soul. But, it must be acknowledged the further and more eminent season of this blessedness will be the general resurrection-day, which is more expressly signified in Scripture by this term of 'awaking.' . . . What addition shall then be made to the saint's blessedness lies more remote from our apprehension, inasmuch as Scripture states not the degree of that blessedness which shall intervene. . . . But that there will be great additions, is plain enough. The full recompense of obedience and devotedness to Christ, of foregoing all for Him, is affixed by His promise 'to the resurrection of the just;' the judgment-day gives every one his portion 'according to his works.' . . . 'It is when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, and see Him as He is.' That noted day is the day of 'being presented faultless with exceeding joy.' . . . How pleasant will it be to contemplate and admire the wisdom and power of the great Creator in this so glorious a change, when I shall find a clod of earth, a heap of dust, refined into a celestial purity and brightness! when what was sown in corruption shall be raised in incorruption; what was sown in dis-

honour, is raised in glory ; what was sown in weakness, is raised in power ; what was sown a natural body, is raised a spiritual body ; ‘when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption,’ and ‘this mortal, immortality,’ ‘and death be swallowed up in victory.’ So that this ‘awaking’ may well be understood to carry that in it, which may bespeak it the proper season of the saint’s consummate satisfaction and blessedness.—JOHN HOWE, M.A.

XXXI.

ALL shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and shall spring forth to a new state of re-animated existence, glorious beyond the pen of man to describe, or the heart of man to conceive ; for there shall be new heavens and a new earth wherein righteousness shall dwell for ever. Happy springtime of eternal existence ! The dreary winter of time and of death will have passed away ; and as the plants, shrubs, and trees in the natural world, after winter’s frost, revive, bud, and blossom, animated by the warm and invigorating rays of the sun, so innumerable spiritual plants shall spring from the dust of death, invigorated by the more glorious Sun of Righteousness, and shall flourish in the new created world as plants of righteousness.

There is to be a great and glorious change take place in all things connected with this earth ; and these heavens, the globe on which man now sojourns, as

a probation to eternal scenes, is to be renovated and so greatly changed, that the apostle represents it as a new earth. The vast body of waters which now surround it, and which are so essential to animal and vegetable life, shall be done away, and 'there shall be no more sea.' Jehovah says, 'Behold I make all things new.' The visible heavens will be changed; for they shall pass away; the elements shall melt with fervent heat when the earth and all that is therein shall be burnt up. How solemn the scene, when the creating power of Infinite love shall be called into exercise in the forming of the new heavens and the new earth wherein righteousness is to dwell for ever. The former things will have passed away: sin shall never be permitted to pollute, nor sorrow, the fruit of sin, to enter, the glorious regions of the new heavens and the new earth.

All will be holy like the Creator; and as in the first creation, before sin had defaced the works of Jehovah, it was very good, so now for ever shall it continue so. Not one sin shall be committed; not one tear shall fall from the eye of any one of the holy inhabitants of those perfectly happy regions. The more immediate presence of God will be there with His people; the Lamb will be there, and shall lead the throng to living fountains from whence will emanate pleasures for evermore. The inhabitants shall need no candle neither light of the sun; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb will be the light.

What glorious ideas do these views present of the future heavens and earth, connected with the future position of the Redeemer's flock. Their probationary course will long have ceased ; death will have been destroyed ; the resurrection will have taken place ; the scenes of the final judgment will have been concluded ; the final position of all men will have been fixed for ever. Then will be fully seen the blessed results of the death of Christ, and the outpouring of His holy Spirit in the renovation of the human mind. Then will be seen the wisdom and love of God in the varied movements of His providence towards the disciples of His Son. Then will be unveiled the glorious mystery which shall then be finished, into which the angels now desire to look. Then shall the Christian appear no more under a cloud—no longer exposed to scenes like the present—but beneath the smile of creating and redeeming love, he shall live in the salubrious atmosphere of the new heavens and the new earth. He shall then appear happy in the complete renovation of his character, immortal in his nature and glorious. If you are a Christian indeed to what a glorious state you are about to be advanced ; what a character throughout eternity you will sustain—a character upon which God will smile, which Christ will approve, and in which the holy angels shall delight and rejoice.—
GODFREY THEOPHILUS PIKE.

DREAMS OF HEAVEN.

TELL me what hues the immortal shore
 Can wear, my bird ! to thee
 Ere yet one shadow hath passed o'er
 Thy glance and spirit free ?

‘ Oh ! beautiful is heaven, and bright
 With long, long summer days ;
 I see its lilies gleam in light
 Where many a fountain plays.’ . . .

Thou poet of the lonely thought,
 Sad heir of gifts divine !
 Say with what solemn glory fraught
 Is heaven in dreams of thine ?

‘ Oh ! where the living waters flow
 Along that radiant shore,
 My soul, a wanderer, shall know
 The exile-thirst no more.

‘ The burden of the stranger’s heart
 Which here alone I bear,
 Like the night-shadow shall depart,
 With my first wakening *there*.’ . . .

O woman ! with the soft, sad eye
 Of spiritual gleam,
 Tell me of those bright worlds on high,
 How doth *thy* fond heart dream ?

‘ Oh ! heaven is where no secret dread
 May haunt love’s meeting hour ;
 Where from the past no gloom is shed
 O’er the heart’s chosen bower : ’

‘ Where every severed wreath is bound ;
 Where none have heard the knell
 That smites the heart with that deep sound,—
Farewell, beloved !—farewell !’

MRS. HEMANS.

